

**BRIDGING EARTH AND HEAVEN: AFTER DEATH COMMUNICATION
AS A SOURCE OF COMFORT AND HEALING FOR THE BEREAVED**

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Peadar Gabriel Cronin

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Abstract

BRIDGING EARTH AND HEAVEN: AFTER DEATH COMMUNICATION AS A SOURCE OF COMFORT AND HEALING FOR THE BEREAVED

by

Peadar Gabriel Cronin

The author of this thesis seeks to inform care providers—members of clergy, grief counselors, healthcare professionals—of the nature, value and availability of the phenomenon of *After Death Communication*, as a means of enabling bereaved people to process their grief. Thus care providers, while assessing the needs of a bereaved client, will be better able to present to the client, for consideration, that in addition to traditional methods available as vehicles for Grief Work, there also is available the dynamic of *After Death Communication*—both in the form of mediumship and/or *Induced After-Death Communication (IADC)*—as proven, viable and valuable means of engaging in Grief Work that effect inner peace, spiritual comfort and healing for people who are struggling with the challenge of their grief.

Mindful of the lack of openness of many people to the phenomenon of mediumship due to reasons cultural, historical, and especially those of traditional religions of the western world, the author of this thesis seeks to bring clarification and reconsideration to past, misinformed stereotypes and stigmas relating to this dynamic, by placing it in a more easily understood and favorable context, supported by the authority of Scripture in which Jesus himself—the medium *par excellence*—in his final discourse

issued to his disciples his unequivocal exhortation, “I am telling you the truth: those who believe in me will do what I do—yes, they will do even greater things, for I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). Thus the author of this thesis seeks to provide a clearer understanding of the scriptures that portray a Jesus who—through the lived experience of his life on earth, his death, and his resurrection—confirmed that life continued after death, that communication with the spirit world was something in which he regularly engaged (Matthew 17: 2-3), and that communication with him (from the spirit world) was not only possible but a dynamic in which his followers are invited to engage, a dynamic that certainly should not be perceived as dangerous, deluded, or sinful. Afterall, as Jesus said, “By their fruits you shall know...” (Mt. 9:41).

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Problem Addressed by Project

This project seeks to provide those involved as care providers— members of the clergy, grief counselors, healthcare professionals—information on the nature and value of the phenomenon of After-Death Communication as a viable tool in engaging in Grief Work that effects comfort and healing for people who are grieving the loss of a deceased loved one.

Importance of the Problem

Grief is universally recognized as a painful experience for the human person. The bereaved are likely to be awash in emotions that are surprising, overpowering, conflicting, confusing, shocking and very unsettling, sometimes even to the extent of being incapacitating.

Entangled in the weighty and often debilitating emotions of grief are some heavy-duty questions that, more often than not, elude easy answers. So often there's the Big Question, "Why?" that splinters off into a seeming myriad of other questions—why death so young; why death so sudden; why the suicide; why the accident; why the gruesome or violent death; why the lingering, pain-filled death? For some people, there are the added questions: "Is there actually a Life after Death?" and if there is, "How is the loved one doing?" "What is the quality of life like for the deceased one?" "Are they still aware of us, interested in us and loving us?" "Is there any real possibility/probability of a re-union?" And there are questions influenced by culture and/or church orthodoxy regarding such things as "Judgment, Heaven, and Hell." Any one or more of those

questions or derivatives therefrom are likely to be asked, the answers to which remain frustratingly elusive and/or inadequate, and so effective Grief Work is impeded, and the challenge of mourning becomes all the greater.

In addition to the above, the bereaved oftentimes have issues that are unresolved—matters that are perceived/felt, with regret, to be unfinished business—guilt at not having said “goodbye,” one last “I love you,” “I forgive you,” “Do you forgive me?” Also among the emotions might be anger with God and/or the deceased for having left the bereaved behind—alone, stranded, frustrated, hopeless, angry, and in turn guilty again for having some or all of these feelings. And then there is oftentimes the presence of fear—fear of the unknown, of an empty abyss, of Divine retribution, etc.

Thus the bereaved oftentimes find themselves floundering in (their) grief, perhaps not knowing how to mourn, and/or not knowing what steps they need to take just to begin to embark on the journey of processing the grief that has such a crippling hold on them, or how to go about actually taking any of necessary and available steps that would enable them to integrate into their lives the new reality of the painful loss of a loved one. And so effective mourning—Grief Work—is imperative if the bereaved are to be able and/or enabled to resume a healthy engagement with the flow of life.

If only those—the people left behind painfully mourning and challenged with making sense of the baffling elements so often associated with death—could get some “word” from the deceased, establishing some form of communication whereby clarity is brought to some of the resounding questions and “unfinished business” that virtually “haunt” the bereaved. Such would be a source of peaceful comfort to and aid for the

bereaved in moving towards integrating the loss into the full scope of their lives, thus bringing much needed healing to the deep wound of grief, a healing that would lead the bereaved to being all the more able to re-enter into a full and healthy embracing of and engaging in the regular flow of daily living.

It is with that end in mind that this thesis offers for serious consideration to both care providers and through them to bereaved persons in their care—especially those in complicated grief—a method additional to the more well known, traditional means that enable bereaved people to process their grief. This method is After-Death Communication by means of mediumship and Induced After-Death Communication. In itself this method is not a new phenomenon; however, due to historical, cultural and religious influences, even critically-thinking people have been left with an often deeply instilled perception that such a method is off limits and therefore should not be engaged. But despite the historical stigma attached to it, this thesis intends to present this form of communication in a comfortably forthright and informing manner that will enable bereaved persons to set aside any reservations, and with a healthy open mindedness to see and embrace the values inherent in it as a viable tool by which much needed healing is effected for bereaved people.

Thesis

In view of the ever present reality of people who are struggling with the challenge of mourning the loss of a deceased loved one, this project is designed to construct materials geared to increasing the awareness of care providers—members of clergy, grief counselors, healthcare professionals—regarding the nature, value and availability of the

phenomenon of After-Death Communication as a viable tool in engaging in Grief Work that effects comfort and healing for people who are grieving the loss of a deceased loved one.

Definition/Highlighting of some Major Terms

ADC: After-Death Communication – either means by which a human person spontaneously receives communication from the spirit world without third-party assistance, or engaging in spirit communication by means of a third-party such as a psychic or medium.

IADC: Induced After-Death Communication using a modified version of Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR).

NDE: Near Death Experience – in which death is experienced, followed by a return to living life in our physical, three-dimensional world.

EMDR: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing—therapy that uses bilateral stimulation, right/left eye movement. As troubling images and feelings are processed by the brain via the eye-movement patterns of EMDR, resolution of the issues and a more peaceful state are achieved.

REM: Rapid Eye Movement that occurs during sleep time while dreaming. It is believed that this phase of sleep allows the brain to consolidate and process memories much more quickly than while awake.

PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome—a seriously debilitating anxiety disorder following a terrifying, traumatic event, that may trigger persistent frightening thoughts

and memories of their ordeal and feel emotionally numb, especially with people they were once close to.

Procedure for Integration

Compose a questionnaire which will be administered to the group of care-providers to whom the oral presentation will be given. The formulation of this questionnaire shall include input from professional people – professors from Claremont School of Theology (CST) and other institutions of higher learning, some mediums who have been actively involved in the phenomenon of After-Death Communication, some ministers who are familiar with this phenomenon and the value it has to offer, as well as other ministers and persons who are involved in Grief Ministry. Administer the questionnaire at the end of the presentation.

Give a three-part, oral presentation to a representative group of Critical Care Providers—members of clergy, members of hospice, and members of the medical profession. Proceed with this three-part presentation in the following order:

1. Give a concise, comprehensive presentation on the prevalence of grief in general, and specifically grief associated with the death of a loved one; the varieties of circumstances that surround and lead to death; the complexity of the dynamics of Grief and the mourning process; the imperative need for Grief Work to be engaged so that healing is effected, and a conclusion that points to the achieving of effective Grief Work through means that are in addition to the recognized, traditional methods, namely After-Death Communication.

2. Give an explanation on the nature of After-Death Communication and the different ways through which this is accomplished. To that end, have an experienced, reputable psychic medium give a presentation on the dynamics of mediumship as well as its fruits in effecting comfort and healing to bereaved persons; have the medium give an actual demonstration of mediumship at work.
3. Follow this with a presentation by a professional psycho-therapist who is also certified in the administration of Dr. Botkin's method of Induced After-Death Communication. Have this latter presentation cover the history and development of this method, giving examples of and statistics on the success this method has enjoyed in treating traumatized clients, including those experiencing Chronic Grief.

Allow this three-part presentation to be followed by a period of time allocated for oral feedback—questions, clarifications, observations, and any sharing of experiences that the participants may wish to do.

Conclude by distributing the prepared questionnaire to all participants, asking them to fill in their answers to the list of questions and submit the completed questionnaire before their departure.

Make available some informational handouts—selective bibliography in the field of After-Death Communication; a schedule of further presentations – including appointments for one-on-one readings – in the local area by the medium; information on the availability of the services of certified personnel in IADC (relatively local); and a

listing of some websites for either gaining further information on or making contact with persons in the areas of mediumship and/or Induced After-Death Communication.

Works Previously Done in the Field

The subject of this project covers materials in two fields—the area of grief and mourning as well as that of communication with the world of the spirit. Death has always been with us as an intrinsic part of our three dimensional world. Since the dawn of time, humankind has been aware of and has had to come to terms with the reality of life moving along in cycles—birth, growth, and death. Down through the ages, the artistic spirit of humankind—in poetry, literature, painting, sculpture, song, dance and music—has given expression to the awareness of the inevitability of Death as a part of the dynamic of life, and has treated it as a profound moment of conclusion that could be tragic, heroic, a peaceful culmination, a cause for fear, a threat, a punishment, a curse, an escape, or a moment of anticipation for all that faith suggested lay in store for the deceased in the Afterlife.

As Sigmund Freud pioneered the study of the workings of the unconscious, and his one-time co-worker Carl Jung did likewise with his lifelong study of the “collective unconscious,” Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross made a similar pioneering contribution in the field of *Death and Dying*, which prior to then had been a subject that was greatly feared, little understood, not seriously studied, and certainly not articulated in any formal, scholarly manner. In her ground breaking work *On Death and Dying*,¹ she shared the results of her interviews with thousands of dying patients—those who were aware of the

¹ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Scribner, 2003).

immanence of their death. She concluded with her now famous and widely accepted perception that there are five stages that a typical, dying person goes through—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Later on in her studies, she applies these same five stages to the process of grieving.²

Since that most significant study by Kübler-Ross, much reflection and extensive further research and writing have been done. Much has been written on the wide variety of ways that Death is encountered by people – from death of a fetus to the resigned, contented dying of a person who has enjoyed an exceptionally long life of a hundred years or more. Understandably, these writings have also given much needed attention to the grief that is attendant on the loss of a deceased loved one, regardless of the manner or timing of the death.

On the clinical side of things, there is of course, Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia"³ in which he views mourning as a process of withdrawing of the libido from the deceased loved one and redirecting it elsewhere. Next of significance in this field is the work of Wayne Oates who is considered to be a pioneer in his own right as the person whose cross-disciplinary approach of combining psychological models with pastoral spirituality and biblical teaching led to the modern pastoral care movement. In his theory of grief, he outlined a progression of stages—1) The initial, shocking blow of the loss; 2) The numbing effect of the shock; 3) The struggle between fantasy and reality; 4) The break-through of a flood of grief; 5) Selected memory and stabbing pain; 6) The

² Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Life after Death* (Berkeley CA: Celestial Arts, 2008).

³ Sigmund Freud, (1917) "Mourning and Melancholia," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol.14 (London: Hogarth Press, 1957). 125-53.

acceptance of the loss and an easing into (re-entry) an affirmation of life itself.⁴ Twenty-three years later, this was developed in greater detail by Yorick Spiegel⁵—the eminent German scholar, clinician, and Professor Emeritus of Systematic Theology at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main—in his now widely known and used work, *The Grief Process: Analysis and Counseling* in which while he limits the stages to four, he gives each one much more detail and substance, calling them—1) Shock, 2) Control, 3) Regression, and 4) Adaptation.⁶ Other scholars who have made significant contributions to this developing field are pastoral psychologist Edgar Jackson,⁷ the rabbi and psycho-analyst Jack Spiro,⁸ Colin Murray Parkes (from empirical research),⁹ David K. Switzer,¹⁰ and R. Scott Sullender.¹¹

There are many other works that are less clinical but nevertheless very practically helpful in understanding grief and mourning. In view of the complexity of grief as well as the various stages of mourning, I shall limit my listing to those that are generally considered to be among the best in the field, and to a selection that is representative of the variety of ways that death of a loved one can be experienced. Pauline Boss offers *Ambiguous Loss*¹² in which she gives a comprehensive view of grieving that is frozen, leaving without goodbye, goodbye without leaving and the overall challenge of living

⁴ Wayne Oates, *Anxiety in Christian Experience* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1955), 52-55.

⁵ Yorick Spiegel, *The Grief Process: Analysis and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978).

⁶ This will be further expanded in Chapter 2.

⁷ Edgar Jackson, *Understanding Grief* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957).

⁸ Jack Spiro, *A Time to Mourn* (Jacksonville, Florida: Block Publishing, 1967).

⁹ Colin Murray Parkes, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Taylor Francis, 1972).

¹⁰ David K. Switzer, *The Dynamics of Grief* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970).

¹¹ R. Scott Sullender, "Three Theoretical Approaches to Grief," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 23, no. 4, (December, 1979): 243.

¹² Pauline Boss, *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

with unavoidably unresolved grief; Maggie Callanan and Patricia Kelley give us *Final Gifts*¹³ in which they lead us to an understanding of the special awareness, needs and communications of the dying, including Nearing Death Awareness, a phenomenon that is related to but distinct from Near-Death Experience (which we shall be considering later on); In *A Silent Sorrow*,¹⁴ Ingrid Kohn et al. inform us of the complexity and deep grieving associated with pregnancy loss – physically, emotionally, relationally, and socially; Joseph Bernstein, in his book, *When the Bough Breaks*,¹⁵ takes us through the throes of grief associated with the death of a child; Theresa M. Huntley gives us *Helping Children Grieve: When Someone They Love Dies*;¹⁶ R. Scott Sullender leads us to “A New Way of Walking with God” in his book *Losses in Later Life*¹⁷ by looking at the multifaceted dynamic of grief—spiritual health and grief, the process of grieving, abnormal and unhealthy grief such as worshipping a deceased person or other loss in a way that mimics the worship of a god; and Carla Fine gives us *No Time to Say Goodbye*¹⁸ in which she covers the painful loss of a loved one due to suicide.

For centuries, while people always had a fascination with the phenomenon of communication with the Afterlife, it nevertheless remained outside the mainstream, mainly due to fear, ignorance, misinformation, misrepresentation, and the disapproving

¹³ Maggie Callanan and Patricia Kelley, *Final Gifts: Understanding the Special Awareness, Needs, and Communications of the Dying* (New York: Bantam, 1977).

¹⁴ Ingrid Kohn, Perry-Lynn Moffit, and Isabelle Wilkins, *A Silent Sorrow: Pregnancy Loss*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Brunner-Rutledge, 2000).

¹⁵ Joseph Bernstein, *When the Bough Breaks: Forever after the Death of a Son or Daughter* (Kansas City, MO: Andrews and McMeel, 1998).

¹⁶ Theresa M. Huntley, *Helping Children Grieve: When Someone They Love Dies* (New York: Henry Holt, 1983).

¹⁷ R. Scott Sullender, *Losses in Later Life: A New Way of Walking with God*, 2nd ed. (New York: Haworth Pastoral Press, 1999).

¹⁸ Carla Fine, *No Time to Say Goodbye: Surviving the Suicide of a Loved One* (New York: Broadway Books, 2000).

influence of organized religion; for the most part, it was a taboo subject, except among indigenous peoples in different parts of the world who were viewed by the self-styled civilized and informed world to be primitive, uncivilized and pagan, and thus to be shunned, and whenever possible to be converted from it, either by spiritually motivated evangelization or some Inquisition-style manner of persuasion.

However, in the past fifteen years or so, mainly due to increased media coverage as well as being a topic of numerous television programs,¹⁹ the phenomenon of communication between the two worlds – our own present, three-dimensional world and that of the world of the spirit, the Afterlife – has moved more and more into the mainstream. People are more likely to feel freer to exercise their God-given ability to think critically for themselves, without the centuries-old restraints and dictates of organized religion. Because of this, people in general are better informed, have become relatively more comfortable with it, and thereby have become more open to debating it and more dispassionate in considering the possibility of there being some value inherent in it. While in recent years, there have been a plethora of books published in this field, I shall refer only to those that are widely recognized as scholarly and representative of the three main areas of the overall field of communication with the Afterlife. One of the most comprehensive treatments of the umbrella topic of After-Death Communication is a book entitled *Hello from Heaven*²⁰ by Bill Guggenheim and Judy Guggenheim,

¹⁹ Programs and movies such as the following: *Medium, Touched by an Angel, Ghost, Sixth Sense, Ghost Whisperer, Eleventh Hour, Eli Stone, Pushing Daisies, Lost, Dear God, Defending Your Life, Five People You Meet in Heaven, Kiss Me Goodbye, The Lake House, Resurrection*, etc.

²⁰ Bill Guggenheim and Judy Guggenheim, *Hello from Heaven* (New York: Bantam Books, 1997). This will be presented in more detail in chapter 2.

recognized researchers in this field. They invoke the sentiments of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, a pioneer in the field of Death, Dying and the Afterlife.

Death is simply a shedding of the physical body like the butterfly shedding its cocoon. It is a transition to a higher state of consciousness where you continue to perceive, to understand, to laugh, and to be able to grow.²¹

This book is the result of a seven-year research project, called The ADC Project,²² that involved interviews with 2,000 men, women and children, contributions from a wide variety of related organizations (such as The Compassionate Friends, Association for Research and Enlightenment, National Hospice Organization, Sharing and Healing, Widowed Persons Service, Parents of Murdered Children, etc.), and feedback from a host of significant fellow researchers in the field among whom are Raymond Moody, Kenneth Ring, Melvin Morse, Ned Dougherty, Maggie Callanan, and Andrew Greeley. Also there is the book *The Afterlife Experiments* by Gary E. Schwartz, Ph.D.²³ that is the result of extensive, scientific research and experimentation with five well known, reputable mediums, challenging them to make contact with entities from the world of the spirit.

In the related field of *Near-Death Experience*, again there is a glut of publications, among which are the more widely acclaimed books by Raymond Moody (a pioneer in this field who actually coined the title of NDE),²⁴ Kenneth Ring²⁵ whose

²¹ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Life after Death* (Berkeley CA: Celestial Arts, 2008).

²² *The After-Death Communication Project*.

²³ Gary E. Schwartz with William L. Simon, *The Afterlife Experiments: Breakthrough Scientific Evidence of Life after Death* (New York: Atria Books, 2002).

²⁴ Raymond Moody, *Life after Life* (New York: HarperCollins Publishing, Inc., 2001); *The Light Beyond* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989).

²⁵ Kenneth Ring and Grelyn Elsaessar Valarino, *Lessons from the Light: What We Can Learn from the Near-Death Experience* (Needham, MA: Moment Point Press, 2006).

extensive research built upon the groundwork laid by Moody, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross²⁶ (in her later work, shortly before she herself died) in her books *On Life after Death*; and (co-authored with David Kessler) *On Grief and Healing: Finding the Meaning of Grief*, and *The Tunnel and the Light*; P.M.H. Atwater's *Beyond the Light: The Mysteries and Revelations of Near-Death Experiences*²⁷ and two of Dannion Brinkley's books, *Saved by the Light* and *Peace in the Light*.²⁸

Then there are the published works of some proven and reputable mediums who are engaged in communicating messages from deceased loved ones to their survivors – George Anderson, Robert Brown, Sylvia Browne, Ned Dougherty, John Edward, Colin Fry, Patrick Mathews, James Van Praagh, and Lisa Williams.²⁹

²⁶ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Life after Death* (Berkeley CA: Celestial Arts, 2008), and *The Tunnel and the Light: Essential Insight on Living and Dying* (New York: Marlowe & Co, 1999); Elisabeth Kübler-Ross with David A. Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss* (New York: Scribner, 2005).

²⁷ P.M.H. Atwater's *Beyond the Light: The Mysteries and Revelations of Near-Death Experiences* (New York: Avon Books, 1994).

²⁸ Dannion Brinkley with Paul Perry, *Saved by the Light: The True Story of a Man Who Died Twice and the Profound Revelations He Received* (San Francisco: HarperOne Publishers, 2008) and Dannion Brinkley, *At Peace in the Light: A Man Who Died Twice Reveals Amazing Insights Into Life, Death, and Its Mysteries* (London: Piatkus, 1995).

²⁹ Joel Martin and Patricia Romanowski Bashe, *We Don't Die: George Anderson's Conversations with the Other Side* (New York: Berkley Books, 1988), *Love Beyond Life: The Healing Power of After-Death Communication* (New York: Harper, 2009); Robert Brown, *We Are Eternal: What the Spirits Tell Me about Life after Death* (New York: Warner Books, 2003); Sylvia Browne, *Conversations with the Other Side* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, Inc. 2002), *Life on the Other Side: A Psychic's Tour of the Afterlife* (New York: New American Library, 2000); Ned Dougherty, *Fast Lane to Heaven: A Life-after-Death Journey* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing, 2001); John Edward, *Crossing Over* (San Diego CA: Jodere Group, Inc, 2001), *After Life: Answers from the Other Side* (New York: Princess Books, 2003); Colin Fry, *Life before Death* (London: Rider Publishing, 2007); Patrick Mathews, *Never Say Goodbye: A Medium's Stories of Connecting with Your Loved Ones* (St. Paul, : Llewellyn Publications, 2003); James Van Praagh, *Talking to Heaven: A Medium's Message of Life after Death* (New York: Penguin Group, 1999), *Healing Grief: Reclaiming Life after Any Loss* (New York: New American Library, 2001) and *Unfinished Business: What the Dead Can Teach Us about Life* (New York: HarperOne, 2009); Lisa Williams, *Life among the Dead* (New York: Pocket Books, 2008).

And finally there is the relatively new book based on extensive research by Allan L. Botkin, Ph.D.³⁰ in which he introduces us to a new phenomenon that he “stumbled” upon while working as a professional health-clinician among patients at the Veterans Administration hospital. He has called it *Induced After-Death Communication* (IADC). He realized that his patients were reporting vivid experiences involving encounters with friends and comrades who had died in the Vietnam War, in which the bereaved person is given messages of comfort and frequently insight into something involving the departed ones. This new therapy has been proven to be 95% successful;³¹ it has been replicated by thousands of practitioners in the field of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) trauma therapy, and is now being taught to thousands more throughout this country and in Canada.

This is by no means an exhaustive listing of all the material that are now available to anyone seeking such material, but it does represent some of the best that is presently available in this field.

Scope and Limitations of the Project

This project seeks to disseminate to those who are providing care to people in bereavement with information on an alternative, valuable resource, in addition and complementary to the traditional resources and services already available in the field of grief ministry. Such care providers include those in the medical profession including hospice, bereavement outreach, the mental health profession, and members of the clergy.

³⁰ Allan L. Botkin, with R. Craig Hogan, *Induced After-Death Communication: A New Therapy for Healing Grief and Trauma* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing, 2005).

³¹ Information supplied from the author’s personal interviews with Dr. Botkin.

The project seeks to inform these care providers, first of all, of the nature of After-Death Communication, and secondly, to alert them to the value of this phenomenon as a proven, viable source of comfort and healing for the bereaved.

Thus care providers, while assessing the particular needs of a bereaved client, will be better able to present to the client, for consideration, the many different methods available as vehicles for healing, including After-Death Communication.

The project also seeks to make the care providers aware of the need to be informed of reputable services in this field, so as to be prepared to give direction to clients who might freely decide to seek help from such services.

The project will limit its goal to that of reaching a relatively small group (twenty people) that is representative of the fields mentioned above. This project will not seek to provide scientific proof of the validity of After-Death Communication.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 1—Introduction:

This chapter will state the thesis of the project, discuss the problem and its importance, and define necessary terms. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introduction and set the stage for the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2—Death and Its Aftermath—Grief and Mourning:

This chapter will present a concise overview of the very complex and painfully challenging reality of grief and the process of mourning the loss of a deceased loved one. It will touch on the variety of ways that death impacts the lives of people—death of a fetus, a baby, a young child, or an offspring; death of a spouse, a parent, a grandparent, or

a close member of the extended family; death following an illness; sudden death due to accident or suicide; or heroic death of one engaged in public service—police, fire science or some branch of the armed forces. It will then list and consider the wide variety of different ways that grief affects the bereaved as well as the processes of and need for effective mourning. Finally, it will present one model by which the bereaved are enabled to process the dynamics of Grief Work.

Chapter 3—Belief in an Afterlife and After-Death Communication:

This chapter will cover, first of all, a very concise review of the universality of belief in an Afterlife, the historical development of eschatological symbols and how they impacted the world-view of the main religions of the western world, and a broad overview of the subject area of communication between our present, known world and the world of the spirit. This will include a historical overview of this phenomenon, including concise but comprehensive sections on Spiritualism, Mediums, and Induced After-Death Communication.

Chapter 4—“By Their Fruits You Shall Know”

This chapter will present those benefits that After-Death Communication can offer grieving people, enabling them to receive comfort and healing, resulting in being all the more able to re-enter into a fuller engagement in the regular flow of daily living. It will include some specific examples of actual, bereaved people who were the recipients of such communication, and how they greatly benefited from the healing that resulted.

Chapter 5 – The Project:

This chapter comprises the project that seeks to inform care providers, first of all, of the nature of After-Death Communication, and secondly, to alert them to the value of this phenomenon as a proven, viable source of comfort and healing for the bereaved. Thus care providers, while assessing the particular needs of a bereaved client, will be better able to present to the client, for consideration, that in addition to the many traditional methods available as vehicles for healing bereavement, there is also the dynamic of After-Death Communication.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion:

This chapter will offer reflections and points of summary, and state conclusions drawn from implementing the project.

Chapter 2: Death and Its Aftermath: Grief and Mourning

Introduction: Our Awareness of Death and Our Approach to It

Despite the fact that—as mentioned in the introductory chapter of this thesis—death has always been with us as an intrinsic part of our three dimensional world, and our awareness of this inexorable fact is echoed in the words of the poet reminding us that our “feet tread the way of all flesh,”¹ nevertheless, there is, perhaps, no other single act in the drama of our journey through life that causes more anxiety, fear, avoidance, denial than does the very regular, natural and unavoidable phenomenon of death. In the words of William E. Phipps, even

sympathy cards shows that only three percent mention the forbidden word. ‘Leave-taking’ or ‘called upstairs’ are among the fig leaves used to cover the four-letter word *dead*. In contrast to the weather, dying is what everyone does and no one talks about. In fact, ‘Never say die’ is one of our most common sayings ... The ugly facts [of death] are relentlessly hidden; the art of the embalmers is an art of complete denial.²

In our culture, even talking about death is generally avoided as being discomfiting and unsettling, and engaged only when absolutely necessary. A serious, yet casual, conversation about death is, more often than not, an anomaly. And even though every single day news reports inform us that thousands of people die every hour throughout the United States, the phenomenon of death is generally viewed as a very unwelcome, trespassing guest to be tolerated and entertained grudgingly only when absolutely necessary.

David Hendin labels [death] “un-American” and says, “Its inevitability is an affront to our inalienable rights of ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’”

¹ Robert Browning, “Jochanan Hakkadosh,” *Jocoseria* (London: Smith, Elder, 1914), 83.

² William E. Phipps. *Death: Confronting the Reality* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), 7.

In the *Immortalist*, Alan Harrington defiantly asserts, “Death is an imposition on the human race, and no longer acceptable.” Americans want to forget that no one gets out of this world alive.³

But as an old proverb states, “There is nothing as brutal as a fact,” just about every person—at one time or another—is forced to face up to and accept the stark reality of the presence of death in an unavoidably close and personal encounter. At some point, there is the uncompromising unavoidability of having to encounter death, face it, and come to terms with it.

And regardless of the circumstances that lead to and cause the death of a person—a loved one, a friend, or an acquaintance—invariably, the impact of the death on those left behind is that of loss, experienced as a deeply felt sadness that is known as grief. Grief is a powerful, emotional force that is awakened or activated within the person made aware of the loss of someone to death. There are many variables that influence how a person responds to and comes to terms with this grief, and it can be a rather complicated process. But for the healthy, well being of the bereaved, it is imperative that Grief Work be done, and that the bereaved be able by oneself, or additionally be enabled through the help of others to embrace and engage in the process of mourning. It is to that end, that this chapter presents an overview of the complexities of the whole dynamic of death, grief, and mourning and how the needs of the bereaved might best be understood, and direction be given the bereaved through the work of mourning.

³ Phipps, 8.

Defining Death

Death can be the result of many factors, all of which can have a very definite bearing on the way the bereaved left behind⁴ relate and react to the phenomenon of the death of a loved one (or acquaintance).

Down through known history, it has generally been relatively easy to determine when a person has died, regardless of the cause. In earlier times the death of a body was determined simply by the absence of both breath and a heart beat, but in more recent times society has come to realize that by themselves such are not necessarily conclusive.⁵ In 1968 a Harvard Medical School committee identified five criteria of death as essential for a coma to be declared irreversible,⁶ and in 1970 Kansas became the first state to come up with a legal test for the determination of death. In 1981, a United States government

⁴ In this context there is a conscious effort to avoid using the term “survivor” when referring to grieving persons. John W. James and Russell Friedman inform us that “*Survivor* is intellectually inaccurate. It implies that the griever has outlived someone else. But we have discovered that the word *survivor* tends to act as both a definition and a diagnosis and often keeps people stuck in a dangerous and painful rut. For example, you don’t survive someone else’s suicide. You may survive if someone tries to murder you, but not when they attempt or commit suicide.” See James and Friedman in their book, *The Grief Recovery Handbook* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2009.), 20.

⁵ However, William E. Phipps informs us of a lack of certainty in numerous instances recorded from ancient Roman era to more recent ones during the last few centuries in Scotland, England, France, Australia and more recently in the United States – Oregon, Illinois, West Virginia, Wisconsin, among others – in which a person who had been declared dead was revived or later determined (often by accident) to be still alive. “[Furthermore], in 1983 a brain-dead pregnant woman was kept on a respirator in Virginia for a record eighty-four days until a normal child was delivered by cesarean section. That same year a similarly brain-dead Japanese woman gave natural birth to a live baby.” Phipps, *Death: Confronting the Reality*, 10-12.

⁶ Brent Q. Hafen and Kathryn J. Frandsen, *Faces of Death* (Englewood, CO: Morton Publishing, 1983), 102: 1. The person is completely unresponsive to stimulus and completely unaware of his own internal needs. 2. The person does not respond at all to pain, touch, sound, or light, and the person does not breathe on his own or move his muscles by himself. 3. The person completely loses muscle tone and reflexes. 4. The person exhibits a flat electroencephalogram (for brain waves) even when the test is conducted under ideal conditions. 5. There is no change in any of the above conditions twenty-four hours later.

commission issued the *Uniform Determination of Death Act*⁷ that states that “an individual who has sustained either (1) irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions or (2) irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem, is dead.”⁸ But according to Phipps,

a uniform national standard is needed since it is still possible for the same body to be “alive” in one state and “dead” in another ... Robert Veatch, a Hastings Center associate with a background in science and theology, maintains that a definition of death should include this primary element: “A person will be considered dead if in the announced opinion of a physician, based on ordinary standards of medical practice, he has experienced an irreversible cessation of spontaneous cerebral functions.”⁹

The distinguished surgeon and author, Sherwin B. Nuland, has similar sentiments that he offers in his book, *How We Die*, when he refers to

certain universal processes that we all experience as we are dying. The stoppage of circulation, the inadequate transport of oxygen to tissues, the flickering out of brain function, the failure of organs, the destruction of vital centers – these are the wagons of every horseman of death ... [they] are not only our most common avenues to death; they are also the ones whose paving stones are trod by everyone, no matter the rarity of the final disease [or circumstance surrounding any death].¹⁰

One thing that is quite clear from the above references is that one of the few things that are common to all deaths is the fact that the physical body ceases any longer to have the life force in it. No longer does it have any ability within itself to function in any sense of the word. It is no longer a dwelling place; the previously known spirit and

⁷ The *Uniform Determination of Death Act* (UDDA) is a draft state law that was approved for the United States in 1981 by the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, in cooperation with the American Medical Association, the American Bar Association, and the President's Commission on Medical Ethics. The act has since been adopted by most US states and is intended "to provide a comprehensive and medically sound basis for determining death in all situations."

⁸ Phipps, 15.

⁹ Phipps, 15-16.

¹⁰ Sherwin B. Nuland, *How We Die* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), xv.

consciousness have vacated the physical dwelling of the body. The “Silver Cord”¹¹ that connects the human person with the Other World is severed. The fully integrated human person ceases to be. The body is dead. For the purposes of this writing, we shall proceed with the understanding of death as that state of the body in which it is generally and reasonably recognized as not any longer having in it any expression of life, as we know it.

Beyond that one common factor there are as many varieties of the death experience as there are deaths; “... death hath ten thousand several doors for men to take their exits.”¹² However, there are some general categories of which we are aware, simply from the experiences of the phenomenon of death. There is death that is anticipated, its immanence recognized – one that is the result of the breakdown of the body due to old age, or that of an illness of lengthy duration. There is death due to a wide variety of accidents, whose suddenness makes the impact of the death on the bereaved more difficult to deal with. And there is death that is the result of some form of violence, as in homicide, suicide, or in the violent nature of some accidents – all of which have all the more shocking impact on the bereaved.

The Ideal Death: Ars Moriendi

The death of some people might be perceived as having been a “good death,” one that is the culmination for a person who has lived a long and fulfilling life and who, with a sigh of satisfaction and in a spirit of anticipation, simply lets go and embraces that

¹¹ From Eccl. 12:6-7, “or even the silver cord be loosed; then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; the spirit shall return to God who gave it.”

¹² John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, 1612.

which has been anticipated—a wonderful state of non-physical being which “eye has not seen nor has ear heard.” (1 Cor. 2:9). It would seem to be of such that the eminent giant in the field of *Death and Dying*, Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, said a mere month before she herself died, “I know that [God] has a time that will be right for me, and when that time comes, I will say ‘Yes.’ And I will then leave my body the same way a cocoon turns into a butterfly.”¹³ This could also be the case in which a person dies as a result of a recognized act of altruistic heroism, such as that of Maximilian Kolbe,¹⁴ or the concluding act of a life lived for and dedicated to some noble cause, such as that of Saint Damien de Veuster,¹⁵ the *Leper Priest of Molokai*. The bereaved of such a death are more easily resigned to it and better able to embrace it, and the challenge of grief for those left behind is more likely to be at a minimum and more easily resolved.

Anticipated Death: The Result of Old Age or Long-term Fatal Illness

When death occurs due to old age or a long-term illness, though certainly, of course, not devoid of some degree of the pain of loss and grief, those left behind have a much better chance to come to terms with the inevitable and immanent moment of separation by engaging in that which is known as *Anticipatory Grief*. Those who are grieving are afforded the chance of both preparing themselves for the inevitability of the approaching death as well as having the satisfaction of engaging and being of help to the

¹³ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss* (New York: Scribner, 2005), xvi.

¹⁴ Maximilian Kolbe was a Polish Franciscan priest who died in Auschwitz after volunteering to take the place of one of ten men who had been slated for death in the infamous Block 13.

¹⁵ Damien de Veuster, Catholic priest, who took the place of his sick brother on a mission from Belgium to the Sandwich Islands (now known as the Hawaiian Islands). He volunteered to work with the exiled and banished lepers on the island of Moloka'i. He spent the last 16 years of his life, in self imposed exile, working with them and for them, eventually dying as a victim of their disease (Hansen's Disease) in 1889.

person who is expected soon to die. Such time affords the grieving loved one(s) the chance to do what is necessary – as far as possible – so that there is no business or at least less business left unfinished by the time the loved one actually dies.

One could safely say that death that is perceived as “ars moriendi” and death that is anticipated tend to be the less traumatic and less challenging for the bereaved, and their journey through mourning is more easily resolved. However, many deaths occur in the context of an unanticipated event that leaves the person(s) left behind in intense grief—with its attendant numbing shock and deep sadness—effecting various degrees of debilitation of one form or another in the lived experience of the one(s) grieving. Such suddenness intensifies the grief, and makes the journey through mourning all the more challenging, over and beyond the usual efforts at dealing with grief associated with a “more normal” loss of a loved one.

Sudden Death

There is a far greater and unsettling impact on the bereaved in the case of sudden death, namely a death that occurs without warning or that does not allow for any degree of preparedness or anticipation. Examples of such are deaths due to fatal heart attack, stroke, accident (automobile, plane crash, recreational accidents, etc.), suicide, homicide, unforeseen consequences of a surgery, and unforeseen complications in a pregnancy, crib death, death due to some previously unsuspected physical condition, victim of a surprising, virulent disease, and any one of many types of natural disaster. There is also the death-causing situation in which the grieving bereaved person is somehow, unintentionally, responsible for the death. Some examples of such a situation could be –

when a person accidentally reverses a vehicle without realizing a child is either hiding or playing out of sight behind the vehicle, killing the child, or in the situation of an accident such as one involving automobile, plane or boat, results in a death while the driver or the primary person responsible survives; teenagers joyriding or fooling around on a moving vehicle, and one falls off and is either run over by the same vehicle or is otherwise fatally injured; when a loaded gun is left unsecured and accessible, and one accidentally discharges the gun, killing self or a sibling or someone else.¹⁶

Sometimes there may be the added complication when the death of a loved one is thought likely to be a fact, but because of certain circumstances, there is no body to provide any degree of certitude of the death. Examples of these would be the possible drowning at sea, missing persons on a hiking excursion, members of public services (such as police or fire departments) as possible victims of an extensive, uncontrollable fire; a dramatic and highly dangerous sea-rescue operation, or some type of explosion; or a member of the armed forces especially in times of war – either missing in action or known to have been in the vicinity of a major explosion. Also, in the United States alone, there is the sad reality of the one million children who run away from home every year, 10,000 of whom are murdered, thousands more who remain unaccounted for,¹⁷ as well as others who disappear, the victims of kidnapping, or just about anyone who cannot be accounted for and who, after a period of time, might be reasonably assumed to be dead.

¹⁶ Helen Fitzgerald, *The Mourning Handbook* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 172.

¹⁷ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross "Unfinished Business," *Death and Grief in the Family*, ed. James C. Hansen and Thomas T. Frantz (Rockville, MD: Aspen Systems, 1984), 2.

Finally, in the words of Hafen and Frandsen, “Sometimes a person will mysteriously die – will simply cease living for no apparent reason of accident or disease. In such cases ... a physician [performs] an autopsy [in an effort] to determine the cause of death,”¹⁸ sometimes successfully and sometimes not, becoming “one for the books,” for the time being.

Death Involving Violence

In addition to a death occurring suddenly, there is also the unfortunately growing modern-day, tragic reality of unaccounted – reasonably assumed to be dead – victims of gang warfare, drug cartel violence, organized crime operations (like that of the disappearance and presumed execution of Jimmy Hoffa), extra-judicial killings by “death-squads” and government sanctioned para-military groups by dictatorial regimes throughout the world,¹⁹ and self-appointed vigilante-type groups in many parts of the world, even in the United States during the civil unrest of the 1960s by such groups as the Klu Klux Klan.

Also included in the categories of both sudden and violent death is the situation in which a person commits suicide. Generally this type of situation leaves the bereaved with a grief that is further complicated with all sorts of questions, regrets, and oftentimes feelings of guilt.

¹⁸ Hafen and Frandsen. *Faces of Death*, 104.

¹⁹ Self appointed vigilante groups, “death-squads” and other government sanctioned para-military groups in many of the countries of South America – Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua; in Asia – Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam; in the Middle East – Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Palestine; in Europe – Germany and Spain during wartime and civil unrest, British occupied Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia’s and Czechoslovakia’s “ethnic cleansing” during and after their breakup, and genocide (Crime of Barbarity) in many countries in Africa – Darfur, Sudan, Nigeria, Rwanda, etc. as well as that of the Armenians by the Turks, and by the English, crown-sanctioned thug, Oliver Cromwell in Ireland’s cities of Drogheda and Waterford.

The suddenness of any death in itself has a shocking and even traumatic effect on those left behind, and it is even more intensely so when the death is the result of some form of violence, or some perceived oversight or negligence. The suddenness of the separation between the bereaved and the deceased oftentimes causes havoc within the person and the life of the bereaved, a challenge that is further complicated by what Moody and Archangel call “a grief-denying culture.”²⁰ In the words of Judy Tatelbaum:

Sudden deaths, especially violent or accidental deaths, provoke our greatest shock, anxiety, and distress. Violent deaths make us feel vulnerable and fearful. Such deaths may provoke our rage or indignation at the injustice of the death. Suicide, too, has a tragic, shocking quality. Suicide may arouse unfounded guilt or a sense of failure among the survivors ... Sudden death feels unnatural. We preoccupy ourselves with “if onlys,” ruminations in which we try to rewrite history to erase this disaster. Because we are so unprepared for loss in a sudden death, and because we usually have so much unfinished business with the deceased, sudden deaths seem to be the hardest with which to cope.²¹

The Aftermath of Death

William Shakespeare has one of his characters pondering that “Of all the wonders that I yet have heard, it seems to me most strange that men should fear, seeing that death, a necessary end, will come when it will come.”²² Not many people have such a calm, philosophical approach to the phenomenon of death. Closer to our own times, we hear Woody Allen remark, “I’m not afraid of death. I just don’t want to be there when it happens” All such sentiments aside, it seems to be a universal fact that the separation and loss associated with death leads to much negativity of emotions, actions and reactions on the part of those left behind. According to the eminent scholars in the field of *Death &*

²⁰Raymond Moody and Dianne Arcangel, *Life after Loss: Finding Hope through Life after Life* (London: Rider Books, 2002), 1.

²¹Judy Tatelbaum, *The Courage to Grieve* (New York: Lippincott & Crowell, 1980), 15.

²²Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, act 2, sc. 2.

Dying—Raymond Moody and Dianne Archangel—the earliest stages of childhood going back even to the birthing process itself has associated with it such emotions as abandonment, separation, anxiety, panic and grief, and the trauma of losing loved ones to death further along the journey of our lives simply “reactivates our very first experiences with separation and grief.”²³ It is that grief that David Kessler, the later writing partner of Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross,²⁴ identifies as the reaction evoked in children while viewing the deaths of Bambi’s mother and Simba’s father in *The Lion King*; he calls it anticipatory grief (archetypally), a fear of the unknown and the pain of foreseeing ourselves having to experience and deal with someday.²⁵ Even the animal kingdom would seem to bear this out. “Numerous veterans report that when they left for war, their pets refused water and food and starved themselves to death.”²⁶ (Elephants, sea gulls, and others, are known to enter into an intense communal expression of grieving/mourning at the death of one of their own.)

And even though the eminent scholar and pioneer in the field of *Death & Dying*, Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, claims that “Death itself is a wonderful and positive experience ... I tell them it is glorious. It is the easiest thing they will ever do,”²⁷ for the person left behind following the departure of the now deceased, the whole scenario surrounding the phenomenon of death (especially that of a loved one), its attendant grief

²³ Moody and Archangel, 5.

²⁴ Her last book that was published after her death *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss* (New York: Scribner, 2005).

²⁵ Kübler-Ross and Kessler. *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss* (New York: Scribner, 2005), 1.

²⁶ Moody and Archangel, *Life after Loss: Finding Hope through Life after Life*, 9-10.

²⁷ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *The Wheel of Life* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 18, 280.

and the efforts at and the need for mourning would seem to be quite a complicated²⁸ phenomenon.

Grief and Mourning

In the following section, consideration and clarification shall be given to such topics as loss, grief, and mourning. The dynamics of loss shall be considered in the wide variety of ways in which it is experienced as a part of the human condition. This shall be followed by a more focused consideration of loss when experienced by those who have lost a loved one to death. Subsequently, the distinction between Grief and Mourning shall be clarified, and the dynamics of both shall be considered in some detail. Finally, a presentation of one particular model for mourning – Grief Work – shall be made.

Loss as an Integral Part of Living

Earlier in this chapter, a reference was made to humanity's awareness of life as moving in cycles – birth, growth, and death. Once born, the human person engages in a constant flow of movement, of change and growth. There is no state that remains in a fixed, unchanging position. The person is constantly drawn to become more than what he or she is at any one point. And that which a person is at a given moment contributes and leads to that which the person is to become. While the human person moving along the journey of life may retain much of that which has preceded and made the person to be what he or she has become at a given point, the person is always involved in the ever-present dynamic of leaving one stage and embracing a newer one, some of which

²⁸ Here the use of the word “complicated” is not to be confused with the term “Complicated Grief” that refers to that unhealthy state in which the grieving person is stuck and unable to resolve the issues of grief.

movement may very well be so subtle that it oftentimes is practically outside the conscious awareness of the individual. Thus the journey of life for the human person is a constant flow of saying “goodbye” to one phase as one embraces the enriching, growth-ensuing challenges of the future. One intuitively knows that there is no “staying put” in one point of the journey, and as the poet says, “there is no going back.”²⁹ But in the basic dynamic of saying “goodbye,” letting go, or leaving behind (whether it is consciously voluntary or perceived to be imposed from without), there is an inherent sense of loss and sadness. “In the ongoing flux of life [we] undergo many changes. Arriving, departing, growing, declining, achieving, failing – every change involves a loss and a gain.”³⁰ And on the ordinary journey of life a person may experience loss in a wide variety of ways, such as losing, having to let go or being deprived of such things as youth, health, relationships, friendships, partners, trust, job, prestige, status, honor, power, possessions, home, country, school, pets, and loved one or a familiar, fellow human traveler due to death.³¹ For the vast majority of people, of all the many ways that humans experience a sense of loss, by far the most intensely felt one is that which is due to the death of a loved one; “Losing someone we love through death is one of the most traumatic of life’s experiences.”³²

²⁹ Anthony Thwaite, “At Birth,” in *New Poems 1961: The P.E.N. Anthologies of Contemporary Poetry*, ed. William Plomer, Anthony Thwaite, and Hilary Corke (London: Hutchinson & Co Publishers, 1961), 98.

³⁰ C. Murray Parkes. *Bereavement: Studies in Grief in Adult Life* (New York: International Universities Press, 1972), 11.

³¹ For a more detailed and clinical treatment of “loss,” please see Kenneth Mitchell and Herbert Anderson, *All Our Losses, All Our Grievs: Resources for Pastoral Care* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), in which they identify six kinds of loss: material, relationship, intrapsychic, functional, role, and systemic.

³² Nancy O’Connor, *Letting Go with Love: The Grieving Process* (Tucson, AZ: La Mariposa Press, 1984), 30.

The focus of this paper is limited to that grief that is associated with the loss of a loved one due to death. Death is a universal truth, and so indeed is grief. One might also add that so indeed is the need for mourning, most especially effective mourning.

Understanding the Distinction between Grief and Mourning

There is a general tendency to equate grief with mourning; sometimes both these terms are used interchangeably, but such is not accurate. While both are indeed fairly closely related, they are, nevertheless two distinctly separate realities. The Webster's *New World Dictionary* defines grief as "an intense, emotional suffering caused by loss, disaster, misfortune; acute sorrow; deep sadness," and it lists mourning as "the actions or feelings of someone who mourns, specifically the expression of grief at someone's death." And so "Grief" is used as a noun, while "Mourning" is a verb form – usually a gerund (but it could also be used as a modifying participle) – and as a verb form it has the characteristic of an action word that refers to that which is actively in process, a journey of engaging, giving expression to, resolving, coming to terms with, working through, facilitating – grief. Admittedly, some confusion arises from the use of the verb form of "Grief," namely "Grieving" which is synonymous with "Mourning," the action part of dealing with Grief. The following two sections go into more detailed descriptions of these two phenomena that are such critically important parts of bereavement.

Grief—

I am weary with my moaning;
Every night I flood my bed with tears;
I drench my couch with my weeping.
My eyes waste away because of grief;
They grow weak because of all my woes.

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?
 How long will you hide your face from me?
 How long must I bear pain in my soul,
 And have sorrow in my heart all day long?
 (Psalms 6:6-7; 13:1-2a)

In the more limited focus of this paper, grief is viewed as that wide array of deeply felt, intensely personal—and very private—emotions that a person feels when made aware of the loss of a loved one due to death. It is that which the unsettling awareness of the reality of the death causes or triggers the eruption (from within the depths of the self) of the untamed, raw, turbulent, gurgling energy of the emotions – the uncomfortable, unsettling, scary, psychic, emotional energy that is awakened in response to the news of the death. To repeat part of the dictionary definition listed above, it is “acute sorrow, deep sadness” that is personally felt within the now bereaved, one who feels robbed, plundered of a treasured beloved, and thus rendered destitute.³³ “The emotions may run the gamut from deep sadness, to anger, to irritability, to anxiousness, to depression ... [one] may feel that [one] is losing control or going crazy”³⁴ and other symptoms considered part of normal grief responses such as shock, emotional numbing, disbelief, denial, fear, confusion, difficulty sleeping, stomach upset, loss of appetite, etc. The eminent writer in grief literature, Ron Sunderland, lists

A host of ... feelings that often crowd the days and nights of the grief-stricken: sadness, which may be expressed by a mild disappointment, or a more intense experience that may deepen into depression; loneliness, isolation, or alienation; helplessness, and sometimes, panic; shame, remorse, and guilt; fear, anxiety, or despair; relief and emancipation, but because we differ individually from one another, we experience them with differing intensities and durations, and our

³³ Gene Fowler, “Bereavement,” *Caring through the Funeral: A Pastor’s Guide*. (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 22.

³⁴ Oswald Hoffmann. “The Grieving Process,” in *The Bereavement Ministry Program* by Jan Nelson and David Aaker (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 1998), 38.

reactions to them will reflect the types of responses we have developed individually over our respective lifetimes. Many of us spend little time “processing” our feelings. We usually experience and react to them, put them aside, and go on with our daily lives, yet they may preoccupy much of our time at various levels of conscious or unconscious activity.³⁵

Grief is a painful impacting of the deep soul. It may come about in the form of *Anticipatory Grief*, which, though important in its own right, does not necessarily take the place of the normal grief that follows on the departure of the deceased, nor does it necessarily decrease the grief experienced after death. But *Anticipatory Grief* does provide family members the time to gradually absorb the immanence of the approaching loss, giving them the chance to complete unfinished business with the dying person such as saying “goodbye,” “I love you,” “I forgive you,” seek the forgiveness of the dying person, or communicate to the dying person that it is okay to let go and commend the dying person on the journey from this world to the world of the spirit.

Generally, *Anticipatory Grief* can be therapeutic, but it also can have some negative sides to it such as experiencing too much grief (which is not of benefit either to the bereaved or the dying person), self-accusation of engaging in mourning too soon, or it may intensify attachment to the dying person, thereby not engaging in a healthy, gradual process of letting go as well as not granting the dying person the freedom to let go and simply die.

Normal or Common Grief, in general, is marked by a gradual movement from the initial pain of separation toward an acceptance of the loss – a movement through some or all of the stages covered in more detail later on in this chapter – such as emotional

³⁵ R. Scott Sullender, *Getting through Grief: Caregiving by Congregations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 39-40.

numbness, shock, disbelief, denial, anxiety of separation, anger and possibly guilt, loneliness; lack of interest, motivation, and organization in ordinary and usual responsibilities of one's life; sadness, despair, and other debilitating feeling. However, over time, for most bereaved people these symptoms will come to be less frequent, of shorter duration, and/or with less intensity. Although, while it is understood that there is no time-table when it comes to the duration of the experience of grief, generally it is time-limited, and most bereaved are able to process their grief in a relatively short period of time, usually after a year or two. However, psychologist Kathy Norgaard submits:

There is no such thing as closure to grief, which is the stress one feels from bereavement. The reality is that we never close off those experiences. We may go along for a while and think that we do, and then out of nowhere, there are those triggers which remind us of our loss once again.³⁶

Finally, there is that which is known as *Prolonged* or *Complicated Grief*. This refers to grief that is excessive both in degree and duration. It involves any number or all of the phases experienced in so called *Normal Grief*, but are experienced to an excessive and totally debilitating degree for a duration of time that is considered beyond the normal, extending at least beyond a few years, and for some to as many as decades. This totally debilitating condition causes clinically significant disturbance in social, occupational, and other important areas of normal functioning. Professional psychotherapy, together with appropriately proscribed medicine is usually determined to be needed to help those bereaved who are experiencing this degree of grief. However, for those who are stuck in this debilitating degree of grief, it is the position of this paper

³⁶ Kathy Norgaard, address made at the Death Penalty Conference, Arizona State University, April 14, 2007.

that help is additionally available for them in the form of After-Death Communication – through the help of reputable psychic mediums and/or certified persons in Dr. Alan Botkin’s methodology of administering *Induced After-Death Communication* – as laid out in chapter 4 of this thesis.

Mourning

Grief is the internal part of loss, how we feel. Grief happens; it is analogous to a wound to the soul, and mourning is the hard work of treating that wound. “Rather than being a synonym of grief, mourning is the outward expression of grief that is being experienced subjectively ... the emotional expression of grief, the active psychological and adaptive processes facilitating grief, and the conventional and ceremonial ways of expressing grief.”³⁷ While grief is a state, mourning is a process – a journey, and there is a great need to allow the process of dealing with grief to run its course. Mourning is the word we use to describe how we respond to grief, how we give expression to our grief. It is the outward manifestation of grief and is influenced by one’s beliefs, religious practices, culture, gender, age, and other variables. Also of significance is the relationship that existed between the bereaved and the deceased. To the bereaved the relationship with the deceased could have been that of a spouse, a parent, a child, a fetus as an anticipated child, a sibling, a member of the extended family such as grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle or cousin, a colleague at work, a school or class mate, a neighbor or very close, personal friend, or a well known, admired person (be such a person a public figure or simply more locally well known). Of added importance to this would be

³⁷ Fowler, *Caring through the Funeral: A Pastor’s Guide*, 32, 36.

the duration of the relationship as well as its quality. The quality of a relationship could range from being an intensely personal one to a less personal or casual one. And any relationship could have gone through or be in the process of going through varying stages and degrees of closeness, even including estrangement.

Mourning also includes the more formalized, intentional and conscious aspect of grief. Expressing grief is more formalized in some cultures than others, and such differences could give rise to misunderstanding with regards to a particular culture's ritualized period of mourning and its customs, that might include memorial services, funerals, wakes, mourning dress, and so forth.

Mourning is Grief Work, and according to all those eminent writers on grief literature—Dying, Death, Bereavement, Grief, and Mourning—from the earlier, pioneering Sigmund Freud to the more recent and equally pioneering Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, it is hard work. As a matter of fact, “the duration of a grief reaction seems to depend upon the success with which a person does the grief work.”³⁸ Therese Rando defines mourning as “conscious and unconscious processes and courses of action”³⁹ that help the grieving person deal effectively with the deceased, with the person's own self and with the external world. Rando goes on to say

There must be active movement and change if a major loss is to be processed, worked through, reconciled, and integrated into a mourner's life, and if that individual is to be able to continue on in a healthy fashion in the new life without the loved one. Thus, grief is a necessary but not sufficient condition to come to successful accommodation of loss. The active processes of mourning are required as well.⁴⁰

³⁸ Sullender, *Getting Through Grief: Caregiving by Congregations*, 37.

³⁹ Therese Rando *Treatment of Complicated Mourning* (Champaign, Illinois: Research Press, 1993), 21

⁴⁰ Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*, 23.

The author Thomas Moore offers a prayerful reflection on this matter:

If the dark night is indeed a rite of passage, your job is to let the transformation take place. Be sculpted, renewed, and changed. You are the caterpillar becoming a butterfly. Your task is to let the change happen. Do what you can to participate in and cautiously and artfully further the process. Discover the very point of personhood: the process of constant renewal ... To be a person means that you are always becoming, and a dark night of the soul is one sign that you are alive.⁴¹

Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, in one of her talks, finished her delivery by saying poignantly,

Grief is a very natural emotion; it is really a God-given gift that allows us to come to grips with any loss in life, whether it is the loss of a valued item or a death in the family. It is not necessary to work with grief; it involves shedding tears, sharing, and talking, but it will heal. Grief work, in contrast, is shame, guilt, and fear ('Oh, my God if I had only done this or that!'). The real grief work should be done before the tragedy strikes." ... My dream is that we spend our energies and love in preventing grief work, not in applying Band-aids when it is, theoretically speaking, too late ...

Life is very simple and beautiful. Any human being who holds onto a bad mood does so only for the purpose of punishing God, destiny, the boss, the husband, the wife, the children, the mother-in-law, anything; including himself or herself. It is a waste of energy.

The poem, "Things You Didn't Do" puts it well

Remember the day I borrowed your brand new car and I dented it?
I thought you'd kill me, but you didn't.
And remember the time I dragged you to the beach, and you said it
would rain, and it did?
I thought you'd say, "I told you so." But you didn't.
Do you remember the time I flirted with all the guys to make you jealous,
and you were?
I thought you'd leave me, but you didn't.
Do you remember the time I spilled strawberry pie all over your car rug?
I thought you'd hit me, but you didn't.
And remember the time I forgot to tell you the dance was formal
and you showed up in jeans?

⁴¹ Thomas Moore, *Dark Night of the Soul: A Guide to Finding Your Way through Life's Ordeals* (New York: Gotham Books, 2004), 47.

I thought you'd drop me, but you didn't.
 Yes, there were lots of things you didn't do,
 But you put up with me, and you loved me, and you protected me.
 There were lots of things I wanted to make up to you when you
 returned from Vietnam.
 But you didn't.⁴²

This is unfinished business.⁴³

Of the many critical issues needing to be resolved in Grief Work, perhaps the most challenging is the one involving business with the deceased, considered important, that was left unfinished. For the bereaved, it is the cause of the deep-down center of a pervasive sadness that is cluttered with and entangled by such strong emotions as anger, regret, and guilt. It is a challenging and usually painful effort to bring resolution to this complicated and deeply embedded psychic wound. Very few people are able to navigate this journey by themselves. Some people don't know how to mourn and for the benefit of their overall health, they have to learn how to mourn, and/or be enabled to do so. Family and friends can be of help by encouraging them and helping them mourn. Groups in Bereavement Outreach programs are available in most communities, and these can be of great benefit in helping the bereaved in processing their grief. Professional psychotherapy is also readily available to this end.

A Model for Grief Work: The Dynamics of Mourning

Since the scholarly research and groundwork laid by Sigmund Freud in his pioneering study of the complicated dynamics and processes of the human psyche,

⁴² Poem, "Things You Didn't Do," cited by Leo F. Buscaglia, in *Living, Loving and Learning*, ed. Steven Short (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1982) 76-77, which he introduced with the following, "There was a girl who gave me a poem, and she gave me permission to share it with you ... She wants to remain anonymous ..."

⁴³ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, "Unfinished Business," in *Death and Grief in the Family*, ed. James C. Hansen and Thomas T. Franz (Rockville, MD: An Aspen Systems, 1984), 9-10.

including grief and mourning, a host of eminent researchers and writers have further added to his insights and built upon his foundation, making on-going, significant contributions to the field of grief literature. Extensive research has been done and advances made in the effort of gaining a better understanding of the psychodynamics of grief and mourning and giving articulation to them. A number of such authors have offered models that attempt to articulate the phenomenon of grief as well as the complexities of the journey of mourning. In general, while they might vary in certain details or place greater emphasis on certain points, the different models complement one another, and often overlap. All models seek to articulate the nature of grief and the dynamics of the stages or phases through which most bereaved process their grief. They all point to the basic fact that grief is natural, painful and complex, and the effort to come to terms with it – the journey of mourning – is hard work. And since there is no such thing as bringing complete closure to grief,⁴⁴ there is a definite need that the issues of grief be resolved, and such resolution can be achieved only through challenging engagement of the issues through effective mourning. As the poet Robert Frost suggested, “The best way out is always through.”⁴⁵

Of the many different models presented by different scholars and researchers in the field of grief and mourning, perhaps the one with which most people – professional care providers and those involved in grief ministry – are familiar, is the model that emerged from the extensive research and efforts of Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.

⁴⁴ Ashley Davis Bush, *Five Myths about Grief*, www.ashleydavisbush.com.

⁴⁵ Robert Frost, “A Servant to Servants,” *North of Boston* (New York: Henry Holt, 1915), ONLINE ED.: Bartleby.com, 1999. www.bartleby.com/118/ (accessed March 23, 2010).

Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' Five Stages

As a result of years of extensive research published in her book, *On Death and Dying*, Dr. Kübler-Ross points out that there are five major stages through which a dying person progresses on the way to the moment of death itself—Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. Later on, she was to conclude that these same five stages apply not only to those who are going through the process of dying, but also apply to those who are in the throes of the complicated process of grieving the loss of a deceased loved one.⁴⁶

Denial Stage

In the context of grief, denial is not meant in the literal sense of the grieving person not knowing that a loved one has died. On first becoming aware of the death of a loved one, the survivor is often paralyzed with shock and numbness. In the earlier stages, the shock of the full reality of the death is too much for the psyche. It is somewhat of a buffer zone that eases the pain of the loss. No doubt if all the feelings associated with the full impact of the loss were to be “encountered” on a completely conscious level, it would simply be overwhelming, emotionally. Kübler-Ross and David Kessler point out:

Denial and shock help us to cope and make survival possible. Denial helps us to pace our feelings of grief. There is a grace in denial. It is nature's way of letting in only as much as we can handle. These feelings are important; they are the psyche's protective mechanisms ... We can't believe what has happened because we actually *can't* believe what has happened. To fully believe at this

⁴⁶ Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss*, 8.

stage would be too much⁴⁷

This state leads to such utterance as, “I can’t believe he is dead,” “There must be some mistake,” “This can’t be true,” “Did I just dream that?” “Is it really true?” “Is she really gone?” “Did it really happen?”

In time, as reality slowly seeps in, denial begins to fade; denial becomes replaced with a clearer grasp of the reality of the loss and its finality. There is now an increased awareness of the fact that the deceased is actually dead. Now the mind opens up to questions about the circumstances surrounding the loss. Why, how, did it actually happen? Could it have been avoided? Why did all the parts fall into place that caused it to happen the way it did? And so on, and on. But at this point, it is apparent that there is some progression in the direction of healing and coming to terms with present reality. However, it also means that the fading of denial leads the grieving person to feelings that are now more likely to be coming to the surface – now that they are no longer masked and not addressed on the conscious level as they were during the denial phase.

Anger Stage

The initial reaction of, “This cannot be real!” in the denial stage is now turned into, “Why is this happening?” Once the grieving person has recognized the reality of the loss, there is the tendency to express anger at the reality of the loss. And this anger doesn’t have to make sense; it doesn’t have to be logical or even valid. It is basically just another self-defense mechanism to avoid the full acceptance of the reality of the loss and the pain associated with a complete acceptance; it is an effort to divert the conscious

⁴⁷ Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*, 10.

attention and instead to focus on someone or something else in order to avoid having to deal forthrightly with the pain. The anger may be directed at God, at doctors, at anyone who might have been involved in the situation (as in an accident, homicide, suicide, etc.). It is quite possible that the anger be directed at the grieving self, for not having been able to or have done enough to affect the circumstances leading to or surrounding the death. It is also possible to be angry with the deceased for leaving the grieving survivor feeling so alone and abandoned. This is especially true in suicide cases or in the sudden loss of a partner in marriage, in parenting, or in a particularly close relationship. "I am angry that I have to keep living in a world where I can't find her, call her, or see her. I can't find the person I loved or needed anywhere ... I am lost and full of rage."⁴⁸ In the words of

Kessler and Kübler-Ross:

Underneath anger is pain, *your* pain. It is natural to feel deserted and abandoned, but we live in a society that fears anger. People often tell us our anger is misplaced, inappropriate, or disproportionate. Some people may feel your anger is harsh or too much ... your job is to honor your anger by allowing yourself to be angry ... Anger is a necessary stage of the healing process. Be willing to feel your anger, even though it may seem endless. The more you truly feel it, the more it will begin to dissipate and the more you will heal ... The anger is just another indication of the intensity of your love ... Anger means you are progressing, that you are allowing all those feelings that were simply too much before to come to the surface. It is important to feel the anger without judging it, without attempting to find meaning in it ... Life is unfair. Death is unfair. Anger is a natural reaction to the unfairness of loss ... Don't let anyone diminish the importance of feeling your anger fully. And don't let anyone criticize your anger, not even you.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*, 12.

⁴⁹ Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*, 15-17.

In addition to the loneliness and sense of abandonment that comes with the increased awareness of the actual death and loss, there is the further cause for anger with well meaning people who either are insensitive, incapable of empathizing, or awkward in their efforts at consoling, or simply not understanding of or tolerant with the pace of the survivor's progress through the grieving process. As one grieving survivor remarked, "I sigh the deep sigh of the lonely. I cannot breathe for the loneliness."⁵⁰

Bargaining Stage

Following the anger stage, a survivor oftentimes enters that which is known as the bargaining stage, one in which the grieving person tries to bargain or make some kind of a deal in order to change the outcome they are trying to avoid having to deal with. This doesn't have to follow the previous stage, and indeed may not occur at all, and sometimes when efforts at making a deal are unsuccessful, the grieving person will often revert back to the anger stage. Sometimes this stage is initiated before the actual final loss, an attempt to make deals with God to change the impending loss, "Please, God, I will never be angry again with my beloved, if only you will spare her/him, if you'll let her live."

We become lost in a maze of "if only ..." or "What if ..." statements. We want our loved one restored. We want to go back in time: find the tumor sooner, recognize the illness more quickly, stop the accident from happening ... if only, if only, if only...

... bargaining can help our mind move from one state to another. It can be a way station that gives our psyche the time it may need to adjust. Bargaining may fill the gaps that our strong emotions generally dominate, which often keep suffering at a distance ... We may start out bargaining for our loved one to be saved. Later, we may even bargain that we might die instead of our loved one.

In his well known song, "Tears in Heaven," Eric Clapton writes about his young son who fell tragically to his death. Some of the lyrics could be interpreted as

⁵⁰ Virginia Morris, *Talking about Death* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2004), 176.

the bargaining stage, when he wonders if he will stop crying once he finally gets to heaven.⁵¹

Depression Stage

The next stage is depression—that point in time when any or all of the previous stages have left the grieving person with a full realization of the fact that the loved one is actually dead and lost. There is no longer denial, and anger or bargaining no longer glosses over or avoids the harsh reality of the incontrovertible and brutally honest truth of the death of the loved one. The attention of the survivor has come to engage directly this present truth in all its naked reality – the loved one is gone and lost. The very bottom has fallen out of the world for the survivor, with overwhelming feelings of numbness, hopelessness, frustration, bitterness, self-loathing, lack of any drive or motivation or interest in anything. “Seeking a way out of depression feels like going into a hurricane and sailing around the inside perimeter, fearful that there is no exit door.”⁵² The grieving person is inclined to withdraw from life and feels left alone enveloped in a shroud of intense sadness and emptiness. It was of such that Shakespeare’s Macbeth, on the death of his young and beautiful wife, uttered his plaintive cry, “Life is but a walking shadow ...it is a tale told by an idiot ... signifying nothing.”⁵³

Though in the eyes of some, oftentimes well meaning members of family or friends, depression is viewed as a negative, unhealthy state of being, Kessler and Kübler-Ross remind us that such is not the case, except when the condition is recognized to be

⁵¹ Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*, 20.

⁵² Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*, 22.

⁵³ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, act 5, scene 5, 24–28.

clinical depression (more serious and long-lasting in duration) that would call for the help of a trained, medical professional with possibly the use of antidepressants medications.

The loss of a loved one is a very depressing situation, and depression is a normal and appropriate response. To *not* experience depression after a loved one dies would be unusual ... the realization that your loved one didn't get better this time and is not coming back is understandably depressing ... depression is a way for nature to keep us protected by shutting down the nervous system so that we can adapt to something we feel we cannot handle ... If grief is a process of healing, then depression is one of the many necessary steps along the way ... It slows us down and allows us to take real stock of the loss. It makes us rebuild ourselves from the ground up. It clears the deck for growth. It takes us to a deeper place in our soul that we would not normally explore.⁵⁴

Acceptance Stage

While a grieving person never forgets nor even tries to forget all that made up the story of the life shared with the departed loved one as well as all the pain that followed the full realization of the loss, and has come to terms with and grown through some or all—as needed—of the different stages mentioned above, there eventually comes the moment when a brighter day dawns, the grieving person is able to remember all parts of the story without falling apart, accepts the fact that the loved one is really and truly gone, and emerges from the crippling phases of previous painful phases. The bereaved begins to realize once again that the journey of the grieving person's life is not over, that it is not yet time for the grieving person to succumb to death; rather it is time to embrace the healing and re-engage in the flow of life.

“When I learn to replace denial with acceptance, I begin to see life whole and come to understand that the shadows and the dark places of my life add to the beauty of the whole, because without the darkness and the shadows the brightness would not be bright ... We know instinctively that death and life are one and that

⁵⁴ Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*, 23-24.

death does not mean separation of the spirit. Rather it is a unity of the spirits in some mysterious way. The dead are closer to us in spirit than they were when they were still alive.”⁵⁵

Kessler and Kübler-Ross agree that “We withdraw our energy from the loss and begin to invest it in life. We put the loss into perspective, learning how to remember our loved ones and commemorate the loss.”⁵⁶ The grieving person has grown to the point of having an increased awareness that he/she is no longer in the grip of the sense of powerlessness that pervaded the earlier stages (especially the depression stage), but instead has input in the controlling of one’s own destiny, and has regained the ability and will to choose an active, outgoing direction in which to become involved.

Finding acceptance may be just having more good days than bad. As we begin to live again and enjoy our life, we often feel that in doing so, we are betraying our loved one. We can never replace what has been lost, but we can make new connections, new meaningful relationships, new interdependencies. Instead of denying our feelings, we listen to our needs; we move, we change, we grow, we evolve. We may start to reach out to others and become involved in their lives. We invest in our friendships, in our relationship with ourself. We begin to live again, but we cannot do so until we have given grief its time.⁵⁷

An Added Note on Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’ Five Stages

Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross never intended for her “five stages” to be interpreted literally. She later stated that she had never meant for these stages of grief to “help tuck messy emotions into neat packages.” Not all stages should be expected to be experienced, nor should it be expected that the many stages experienced move in a linear

⁵⁵ Sister Stan [Sister Stanislaus Kennedy], *Gardening the Soul: Soothing Seasonal Thoughts for Jaded Souls* (London: Transworld Ireland, 2009), 11.

⁵⁶ Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*, 28.

⁵⁷ Kübler-Ross and Kessler. *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*, 28.

progression. Kübler-Ross' stages can be experienced multiple times, at the same time, and in any order. It is important to remember that there is no specifically right way or wrong way to engage one's grief and/or to mourn. Everyone is different, and everyone relates to grief in a different way and goes through the process of mourning in various degrees and lengths of time, particular to the individual, bereaved person. Each person's grief is uniquely his or her own, and it is neither predictable nor orderly. The way a particular bereaved person will deal with grief will depend on the personality of the bereaved as well as the relationship that existed between the bereaved and the deceased, the circumstances surrounding and leading to the death, the bereaved person's cultural and religious beliefs, coping skills, previous experiences of grief work, and indeed psychiatric history, as well as age, gender, and other variables. "Grief is influenced, shaped, and determined by a constellation of factors that combine to render a mourner's response unique – as individual as a fingerprint."⁵⁸ It would behoove the bereaved to identify with and embrace the sentiments of the prayer of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke: "Oh Lord, give each of us our own death./ A dying that is born of each life./ Our own desire, our purpose, love, dearth,"⁵⁹ since "Every man's wit must come from every man's soul, and no other body's."⁶⁰ And finally, in the prayerful and insightful reflection of Edward Hays, "The Fingerprints of Grief Psalm":

O God who loves rich variety
who created not simply a single tree,

⁵⁸ Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*, 29.

⁵⁹ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Rainer Maria Rilke's The Book of Hours*, ed. Ben Hutchinson, trans. Susan Ranson (Rochester, NY: Camdon House, 2008).

⁶⁰ Laurence Sterne, *The Works of Laurence Sterne* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1864), 67, as quoted in Sherwin B. Nuland, *How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1994), xiv.

But trees of all kinds, sizes and shapes,
 let me see the vast variety in way of mourning.
 Grant me the grace never to judge others
 in how or how long they grieve.

As unique as human fingerprints,
 so varied and different are the ways
 Each of us grieves and mourns
 the loss of one so greatly loved.
 Gift me with the grace, O God who holds us all,
 not to compare my sorrow
 with the anguish of others who share my loss.

May I never compare grief, O God,
 or judge the apparent absence of mourning,
 the seeming excess of tears
 or the length of time it takes to heal.
 Only grant that my wound dealt by death
 may become glorious as the wounds of Christ.⁶¹

Some Common Myths that Further Complicate Grief and Mourning

Grief and mourning is the same experience.

All bereaved people grieve in the same way.

It takes two months to get over grief

The goal is to “get over” one’s grief.

It is best to move away from grief and mourning instead of toward it.

The bereaved and family will eventually be just the same as before the death of a loved one.

It’s not appropriate for the bereaved to feel sorry for oneself.

Tears expressing grief are only a sign of weakness and personal inadequacy.

There is no reason to be angry at the deceased loved one, and inappropriately selfish to do so.

⁶¹ Excerpted from *Psalms for Zero Gravity* by Edward Hays, copyright © 1998. Published by Forest of Peace, an imprint of Ave Maria Press, Inc, www.avemariapress.com. Used by permission.

Children need to be protected from death and grief.

The bereaved will have no relationship with the deceased loved one following the death.

Once a loved one has died, it is better not to focus on the deceased, but rather to put the deceased in the past and go on with one's life.⁶²

Conclusion

Of such is the complicated world of grief and mourning – both a journey inward that involves engagement with many levels of unpleasant pain as well as hopefully a journey outward that leads to another type of engagement, this time with all that lies ahead inviting the bereaved to begin opening one's arms to embrace life once more with a renewed vision that sees all the chances for further enrichment, growth and enjoyment.

Grief is the gulf that envelops the bereaved, and mourning is the bridge that enables the survivor to get through the painful morass of grief to emerge once again as a functioning member of the human family, enabled once more to become fully engaged in all the goodness that life has to offer and the many chances for continued growth that the journey affords.

⁶² Adapted from Therese Rando, *How to Go on Living When Someone You Love Dies* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980).

Chapter 3: Belief in an Afterlife and After-Death Communication

Universality of Belief in an Afterlife

Every spirit builds itself a house,
and beyond its house a world,
and beyond its world a heaven.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Death has always been with us, and humanity has always been tuned into the physical finality of the experience of it. However, even though death is viewed as an ending, life as a continuum has also been a part of humanity's belief system. Virtually all cultures throughout the course of human history have had some expression of a belief in the soul's existence beyond the death of the physical self. All the great cultures and religions of the world have held that the death experience is merely a doorway that opens up to a non-physical world beyond, a state in which the essence of a person continues to live, variously described as a state of restful fulfillment (depending on the quality of life that had been lived by the deceased).

A Concise Overview of Afterlife Beliefs in some Cultures and Religions

For centuries it had been very much a part of other major cultures, religions, and philosophies of life that viewed death as a doorway into "the nether world," a passage to another level of being. "There is archeological evidence [dating back to about 50,000 B.C.E., the time of Paleolithic or stone-age], derived from ancient burial areas, that preliterate humans embraced some concept of a continuing existence after physical death."¹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (fifteenth edition) says, "Death rites and customs

¹ Joel Martin and Patricia Romanowski Bashe, *We Don't Die: George Anderson's Conversations with the Other Side* (New York: Berkley Books, 1989), 252.

stem from an instinctive inability or refusal on the part of man to accept death as the definitive end of human life; they thus reflect the belief that human beings survive death in some form and represent the practical measures taken to assist the dead to achieve their destiny.” Archeologists have uncovered numerous skeletons curled into a fetal position, suggesting such arrangement as a readiness for “birth” into their new life.

In a relatively recent publication, *Conceptions of the Afterlife in Early Civilizations*,² Dr. Gregory Shushan offers an analysis of the afterlife beliefs of five ancient civilizations – Old and Middle Kingdom Egypt, Sumerian and Old Babylonian Mesopotamia, Vedic India, pre-Buddhist China, and pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. In the ancient Egyptian religion, the afterlife played an important role – when the physical body died, the soul (ka, the body double and ba, the personality) would go to the Kingdom of the Dead. For the transition journey, certain items were placed in the tomb with the body, such as the *Book of the Dead*, as well as food and jewelry. Zoroastrianism believed that the urvan, the discarnate or disembodied spirit of the diseased, lingers for three days on earth before departing to the Kingdom of the Dead. Ancient Greek and Roman cultures had their very definite understanding of an afterlife. The Greeks had their Hades; Plato describes the judgment of souls and its aftermath. The Greeks placed a coin in the mouth of the deceased as payment to Charon, the boatman, to ferry the spirits of the deceased safely across the river Styx and into the Kingdom of the Dead. The Romans had their Pluto, to be accessed by crossing their river Acheron; Homer, in his *Odyssey*, refers to the eternal bliss of Elysium, even

² Dr. Gregory Shushan and Gavin Flood, *Conceptions of the Afterlife in Early Civilization* (London: Continuum, 2009).

though this was reserved for the mortal descendants of Zeus. The Norse described their afterlife as Valhalla: Hel, “The Covered Hall,” and Niflhel, “The Dark” or “Misty Hel.” Hinduism in its Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita (parts of which are believed to date back in oral form for thousands of years before Christ). describes Lord Krishna who speaks of death as a discarding of the old body and the taking on of a new one, just as a person discards old clothes and puts on new ones; the body is but a shell in which the soul temporarily resides, and the soul is immutable and indestructible, having as its final goal Moksha or salvation in the nonphysical world of the Spirit. Buddhism speaks of the interaction between this world and the “World Beyond,” an interaction in which the individual is involved in an on-going process (some form of metempsychosis) of achieving the heavenly realms. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (while believed to have been written around the 8th century, A.D., is also believed to have existed in an oral tradition for centuries before that) speaks of the intermediate state in which a soul resides between lives, as it moves in cycles ever upward into the world of Light. The ancient Japanese believed that death was not as much an ending as it was a transition into another form. The Celtic culture with its still preserved *Festival of Samhain*³ attests to the strong belief they had in the afterlife. The present day practice among the Mexican culture of *Dia de los Muertos*⁴ extends all the way back in history to the time of the Aztecs and their goddess Mictecacihuatl who watched over all the souls whom

³ Samhain, according to Celtic lore, is a time when the boundaries between the world of the living and the world of the dead become thinner, allowing spirits and other supernatural entities to pass between the worlds to socialize with humans. It is the time of the year when ancestors and other departed souls are especially honored. In Ireland and Scotland, the *Féile na Marbh*, the 'festival of the dead' took place on Samhain. It is also a precursor of Halloween.

⁴ *The Day of the Dead*: the Christianized version of praying for the dead.

she welcomed into her realm in the afterlife. The North American Indian culture is fairly well known for its attention to the proper ways of sending the departing spirit of the deceased off into “The Happy Hunting Grounds,” or the world of their ancestors, those who had preceded them into the afterlife. Sikhism believes that the soul belongs to the spiritual universe with its origin in God and its goal to be reunited once again with God in the afterlife (notwithstanding off course, that they believe this reunification is achieved by means of the purification that comes through reincarnation).

Judaism names Sheol as the afterlife, a place where all are destined to go after physical death; Maimonides describes the Olam Haba, “The World to Come,” an afterlife that continues for the soul of every human being. Islam certainly has a belief in an afterlife, giving its nature more of a detailed description than any other religion. And the broad body of Christian believers – including, Roman Catholic, the different Orthodox churches, the various denominations of Protestantism, the Mormon Church, Jehovah Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Universalists, etc. – all clearly profess a firm belief in the existence of an afterlife. The Catholic Church as well as various Protestant denominations celebrate “a communion of spirits” on *All Saints Day* as well as *All Souls Day* (November 1 and 2), a time to remember all those who had passed on to the Afterlife (more on this on page 17).

Communication between Two Worlds

Until relatively recently (in the flow of human history) efforts at communication between the two worlds has not been widely practiced, certainly not as a “two way street.” Admittedly down through history there have been many recorded instances of

visitations and messages by entities from the Spirit World. Certainly God (by whatever name in various cultures) has oftentimes been perceived as communicating His will, His plan, His messages to humanity. Frequently throughout the Scriptures there are listed many examples of angelic beings making contact with humans, either through actual manifestation or through dreams (Book of Tobit and other books of Old Testament, Acts of the Apostles, accounts of angels visiting Joseph, Mary, Zechariah). There also are many examples of saintly men and women, down through history, being “touched by an angel.” The angel Maroni introduced a new religion. Socrates (469-399) claimed to have been guided throughout his life by a protecting spiritual entity. Upon being sentenced to die, he said, “My approaching end is not happening by chance. I see quite clearly that to die, and thus to be released, will be better for me; and therefore the oracle has given me no sign [that it should otherwise be].” Plato, the pupil of Socrates, believed in the soul’s immortality as well as in communication between the two worlds in the form of precognitive dreams and visions. For a thousand years, Grecian and Roman governments hired psychics as a means of consulting with the spirit world, as in the legendary oracles at Delphi. The Greeks were also known to seek and avail of information from dreams in diagnosing and treating illnesses (somewhat reminiscent of the well known 20th century American psychic, Edgar Cayce).

The age-old phenomenon of the psychic side of humanity, coupled with the curious nature of the human person that compelled searching for answers to matters that were believed to be a part of the total mystery of life yet tantalizingly elusive, and that call that Socrates proffered to his students and to humanity, “Man, know thyself,”

have led to more and more overt efforts to demonstrate, experience, research, and articulate this relatively unknown field.

Third-Party Assisted After Death Communication

Introduction

It needs to be understood that while the main focus of this chapter is to consider those means by which communication is established between persons in the physical world and those who are no longer in this world, it is nevertheless of some considerable importance to have a comprehensive understanding of the elements of Spiritualism simply because of the close relationship that has existed between Spiritualism and mediumship, ever since the mid 19th century. It is equally important, however, to understand that while virtually all those involved in the Spiritualist movement believe and engage in the practice of mediumship, not all those who are gifted with mediumship or those who utilize other means of communication with the Other World are necessarily associated or affiliated with the Spiritualist movement or spiritualist churches.

Not all mediums maintain a connection to spiritualism per se, nor do spiritualist churches support resident mediums as most did in the past. Statistics compiled by the Lighthouse Spiritual Centre in Toronto show a total of 70 practicing (and licensed) mediums worldwide at the present time, yet there are more than 1,100 spiritualist churches ... Many of today's mediums are not connected to any church or belief system, preferring to be seen as separate from anything organized⁵

But virtually all reputable mediums, for the most part, have as a part of their mind-set and over-all belief background the view of life that is incorporated in the basic

⁵ Peter H. Aykroyd with Angela Nanth, *A History of Ghosts: The True Story of Seances, Mediums, Ghosts, and Ghostbusters* (Emmaus, PA: Rodale Books, 2009), 96.

tenets of Spiritualism—the human being is made up of three distinct parts: the body, the soul, and, at the highest level, the spirit—and it seems that mediums today are concentrating their skills on healing that triune being. With that in view, it would seem helpful at this point, before focusing more specifically on the dynamics of mediumship, to offer a concise history of Spiritualism.

A Brief History of Spiritualism

Although the idea that man was able to communicate with spirits had existed already for centuries, modern belief (as an organized movement)⁶ in such a practice came about in March 1848 in Hydesville, New York, where unaccountable noises were heard by two young sisters – Margaret and Kate Fox – in an isolated farmhouse. The rappings were attributed to the spirit of a travelling salesman murdered there some years earlier, and were interpreted as his attempts to establish communication with the living. In 1849 in Corinthian Hall (interestingly enough), in Rochester, New York they gave their first public demonstration of mediumship, leading to such a group being called “Spiritualists.” From there, the Fox sisters, (helped by their mother and their older sister, Leah who went on to become the first professional medium) further established themselves as successful mediums with huge followings in New York City, and this in turn led to a mushrooming of Spiritualist circles and séances⁷ that spread along the east coast of America, then westward across the American continent as well

⁶ The spirit behind that which was later to become known as Spiritualism (this was before the emergence of the famous Fox sisters) had its beginning in the mid 19th century in North America, mainly through people such as Andrew Jackson Davies 1826-1910) who was inspired by the (channeled) thinking and spirituality of Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1722) in Sweden (whose writings purportedly had been channeled through Davis, especially *Univericoelum* – The Spiritual Philosopher). Swedenborg had expressed a strong belief in spirit communication.

⁷ These meetings brought increasing hostility from the Church and skeptics, and people who attended were the subject of verbal and physical abuse; in a southern state of America there was even a threat that anyone attending would be lynched.

as across the Atlantic to Europe, especially to England, but also to France, Italy and Germany. In the words of Conan Doyle, (famed author and an avid historian, researcher, and practitioner of Spiritualism himself), “So it is that the humble spirit of the murdered peddler of Hydesville may have opened a gap into which the angels have thronged.”(1926: 56). The movement, which thereafter became known as Spiritualism, would remain strong for nearly a century, becoming especially popular during and after the Civil War and enjoying its greatest revival after World War I (understandably).⁸ The practice was founded on the belief that life existed after death and that the spirit existed beyond the body. More importantly, it was believed that these spirits could and did communicate with the living.

In those earlier years of the movement, especially during the second half of the 19th century in America, the practice of spirit communication was very much an individual pursuit and was practiced randomly by individuals who had out-of-the-ordinary psychic gifts and a natural bent for mediumship. At first it was treated somewhat as a form of entertainment – quaint, unusual, and even sensational – in the form of rapping, table tilting, levitation, and other forms of materialization (such as the production of ectoplasm from the body of the medium) and purported communication from other worldly spirit entities. It was accepted on face value as an exciting, fascinating anomaly – somewhat akin to a magic show as well as an entertaining parlor game.

⁸ This no doubt was due to the fact that families were introduced to the wholesale slaughter of loved ones on a scale they had never experienced before. Now Spiritualism relieved their grief by enabling them to believe that their loved ones were not lost and could be communicated with. Spiritualism filled this huge void, and people were consoled by believing that their friends and family members had gone on to a better place.

But over time, like all belief systems, it developed its own traditions – slowly evolving with its own stories and experiences that made up its history and heritage. However, it was not taken seriously by organized religion; if anything, established religions of 19th century America viewed it as an encroachment on their territory, and especially during the latter half of the 19th century, it did draw membership away from the traditional churches. It was not taken seriously by the scientific community, therefore, for some time it wasn't subjected to any serious research or scientific challenges.

Mediumship

Since the inception of Spiritualism (from Emmanuel Swedenborg⁹ to Andrew Jackson Davis to the Fox sisters and thereafter) mediumship has always been an integral part of it. In Spiritualism, the term medium refers to a person with a psychic ability or gift that is able to “channel” or communicate with a spiritual entity or be a conduit through whom a spirit entity communicates to someone in our physical world. It is not so much the conjuring up of some spirit at the command of the medium or of someone else making the command through a medium. It is rather a cooperative effort at communication between a human being on the one hand and a discarnate, spirit personality on the other side of the communication. Traditionally, there have been

⁹ Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a Swedish scientist, philosopher and scholar with a keen interest in mathematics, astronomy and physics. He showed some psychic ability as a child, but not until later in life did he experience dreams and mystical visions and wrote extensively in the fields of theology and spiritualism, and on death and the afterlife. He was a “traveling clairvoyant” whose soul traveled to distant places, bringing back information. His contemporary Immanuel Kant verified one of his famous such episodes. His thoughts on death, the afterlife and the continued progression of the soul greatly influenced American Andrew Jackson Davis and the later development of spiritualism.

three different forms through which mediumship is experienced – Physical, Mental, and Healing mediumship.

In the earlier years (19th century especially), physical mediumship was the type most often experienced. A trance medium entered an altered state of consciousness during which spirits communicated through the voice and body of the medium (most recent example was the famed American trance medium Edgar Cayce). A materialist medium while leading a séance oftentimes effected some form of paranormal activity of one sort or another as a part of the experience of the séance – the medium is in a trance (an altered state of conscious), accompanied by any one or more of the following: table tipping, rapping or knocking that would communicate through a code (Fox sisters), blowing horns or trumpets, levitation (D. D. Home), materialization (usually through the use of ectoplasm,¹⁰ of objects, including allegedly the discarnate spirit in part or whole, and automatic writing (most recent well known example – Ruth Montgomery, through communication from the deceased, well known medium, Arthur Ford).¹¹

Authentic and sincere mediums have long since steered away from the practice of physical mediumship (except perhaps in small intimate groups), because it had come to be perceived as lacking in any degree of credibility and had become increasingly more difficult for people to distinguish between the valid and the contrived.

¹⁰ Comes from the Greek words *ektos*, meaning “outside,” and *plasma*, meaning “a thing formed” or “exteriorized substance” is a substance emanating from the medium’s body which a spirit produces to make itself visible.

¹¹ A few of her many books: *A Search for the Truth* (New York: William Morrow, 1967); *Here and Hereafter* (New York: Coward, McCann, 1968); *Companions Along the Way* (New York: Coward, McCann, 1974).

...by the 1920s, the era of the physical medium was gone. Most agree that this period was largely killed off by the continued attacks by magicians and debunkers, who exposed fraud after fraud and gave even the legitimate practitioners a bad name. Soon, the mediums no longer wanted to expose themselves and abandoned the physical medium effects of flying trumpets and spirit materializations and turned to mental mediumship instead ... the faith behind Spiritualism teaches that message work is to prove the continuity of life and to prove that the soul goes on after we die. Some of the early phenomena was necessary to get the point across but today, the public is much more open to the idea of things beyond the physical and don't need the bizarre happenings to 'wow them in the aisle' anymore.¹²

While not all psychics have the gift of mediumship, all mediums are psychic and may use any one or more of the four psychic abilities. These are clairvoyance, clairaudience, clairsentience, and clairgustance. Clairvoyance is the gift of seeing; the psychic sees information in the form of pictures, visions, or images. This could involve seeing a ghost, a spirit guide, or a deceased loved one. Clairaudience is the gift of hearing, coming to the mind of the psychic, something that can be challenging in as much as the psychic has to learn to distinguish one's own thoughts and thoughts coming in from some outside source – spirit guide, guardian angel, deceased loved ones, or some earthbound spirit. Clairsentience is more of a body feeling or sensing. Clairgustance is the gift of smell, a kind of psychic nose in which the psychic smells things that are not physically present, usually a smell of something that is associated with some specific person or situation not present. Anyone could have any one of more of these gifts, and some are alluded to later in this chapter, "Spontaneous After-Death Communication"

¹² "History and Mystery of Spiritualism." 3-4. <http://www.praireghosts.com/spiritualism.html> (accessed Nov. 7, 2009).

Development of Theories on Afterlife: Judgment, Heaven and Hell

In general, it is not widely known or understood that a major influence on the theory and theology of *Everlasting Life* of the three major religions of the Western World—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—goes back to the sixth century, BCE to the founder of the Parsee religion (Persian)—Zoroaster.¹³ “Only as the historian of religions looks back does the pattern of cultural influence emerge.”¹⁴ Zoroaster was a person of considerable influence not only in his own Persian culture, but due to the expansion of Persian domination (especially the so-called Babylonian captivity, affecting the Jews) extended far afield beyond the parameters of his native Persia (today known as Iran).

In his theory of final things (eschatology), Zoroaster stressed a personal afterlife. It was he who introduced the term *Paradise* (meaning game park), describing the joys of heaven in the form of sensuousness of a cool, colorful, and fragrant garden, replicating the ideal of earthly experiences. This paradisaal ending is destined only for those who have been judged worthy by the God of Light, *Ahura Mazda*. And it is from this theory—world view—of Zoroaster that came the ideas of Paradise (Heaven) and Judgment with its subsequent determination of reward or punishment.

The Parsees tell of a narrow bridge spanning an abyss leading to Paradise, over which all the deceased must travel. The bridge is precarious; it is made of a sword blade. As a wicked person crosses, the sharp edge of the sword is turned up, causing [the person] to drop into a purgatory governed by a prince of darkness. The inhabitants of the dark, infernal place experience the opposite sensations from the righteous. Its stench is

¹³ Interestingly enough, some Reincarnationists (notably the 20th century American medium Edgar Cayce), claim that the human person, Jesus of Nazareth (before becoming the Christed one), was a reincarnation of Zoroaster.

¹⁴ Phipps, 167.

overwhelming, and its frigidity and loneliness are agonizing. The inmates have appetites, but they are fed only nauseating food. Those who repent of their earthly sins are eventually purified and restored to the paradise they lost.¹⁵

The Jews, prior to contact with the Persians with whom they had a comparatively positive relationship,¹⁶ did not yet have a developed theory of survival after death. But we do hear the question raised by Job, “If a man [or woman] dies, will he [or she] live again?” (Job 14:14). Their earlier Scriptures occasionally refer to Sheol, an abode of the dead that was a terminal grave for both good and bad alike (Gen. 37:35; Job 10:21-22; Ps. 88:3-6). “This Sheol, however, was never a motivating realm or an anticipated destiny ... but to Sheol and to the sense of life beyond death that it represented there was in the Jewish scriptures no commitment, no hopefulness, no comfort and no joy.”¹⁷ It was during and due to the Persian era that the Jews adapted into their religion such ideas as after-death judgment, bodily resurrection, archangels in paradise, and devilish spirits.

Following the fall of the Persian Empire, the Jews further suffered severely under Greek rulers, during which time they developed a doctrine that they felt better explained the inequalities and seeming unfairness of life—the success of the immoral and the suffering of the right living.

It was not until the second century before the Common Era that individual life after death connected with honor and reward rose to become a factor in Jewish life. When it did, it was primarily driven by the concept of divine justice. The narratives in such writings as the books of the Maccabees (see II Macc. 7, for example) about young Jewish persons who, during this period of severe

¹⁵ Phipps, 164.

¹⁶ After a generation of exile in the Mesopotamian valley, the Jews were given liberty to return to Judah by a Parsee called Cyrus the Great.

¹⁷ Spong, John Shelby. *Eternal Life: A New Vision* (New York: HarperOne, 2009) 9.

religious persecution, chose death as martyrs, rather than the public denial of their faith, became intolerable for Jewish people to embrace unless there was some redemptive feature connected to their deaths, such as receiving the reward of faithfulness in some afterlife.¹⁸

The apocalyptic movement – expressed in the Book of Daniel – understood that their God Yahweh will correct in the afterlife all the injustices that had occurred prior to death, “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2). Likewise (a further example of Persian influence), the 2nd book of Esdras points to a “paradise of delight” and a “pit of torment” (Esdras 7:36).

Parsee and Judaic Influences on the Scriptures of the New Testament

In the accounts of the Scriptures of the New Testament, there is some clear influence of Judaic Apocalypticism as well as elements of Parsee religion (especially Parsee eschatology – having to do with end time realities). Jesus responds to one of the thieves on the other cross, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43). Most likely Jesus was speaking about a spiritual condition in which both God and the human person are at one, and not about a physical place in our world.

The final book of the New Testament, the *Book of Revelation – The Apocalypse* – places great emphasis on the Paradise motif. Persecuted Christians are assured, “To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7); God’s people partake of the fruit and drink “the water of life.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Spong, *Eternal Life: A New Vision*, 9.

¹⁹ “The heavens [the Hebrew word *šamayim*, “heaven,” is a grammatical plural, distinguished a number of heavens or stages, varying between three, five, seven, and ten; Paul was taken up to the 3rd heaven (2 Co 12:2)] which in the Old Testament are invisible and unattainable by man (with the exception of the Elijah episode) become in the New Testament the place of dwelling and reward for the

On the other hand, one of the parables Jesus told was about the afterlife in which a poor man and a rich man reversing the roles they had lived as humans before death. Lazarus, the poor man, went to a banquet in Paradise, while the insensitive, selfish, rich man watches from a place of torment, crying out, “I am in anguish in this flame.”(Luke 16:19-24). The image portrayed by Jesus differs from the Parsee only in that it is a brightly burning place of punishment.

In the New Testament it is the gospel of Matthew and the Book of Revelation that most strongly present the image of a fiery punishment following death. It is his account that transformed the old valley of Hinnom (first mentioned in Joshua 15:8, 18:16 and again in Jer. 7:31; 32:35) which by the time of Jesus had been turned into a garbage dump that was perpetually burning and exuding pervasive and foulest of odors – into Gehenna. And so the Parsee imagery was revised and updated, thus handing down to us the metaphor of the fiery pits of Hell.

But it is important to understand that “Jesus, [in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus], used picturesque imagery from Jewish lore [simply] to teach the affluent to help the needy ... It is unlikely that Jesus intended to describe in his parable a literal

Christian. The Christian is a citizen of heaven (Phil 3:20). He looks forward to a home which God will build for him in heaven (2Co 5:1-5). The Christian’s inheritance (1 Pet. 1:4), reward (Mt 5:12+), and treasure (Mt 6:20+; Col 1:5) are all in heaven. The Father and Jesus prepare mansions in heaven for the disciples (Jn 14:1-3). The names of the disciples are written in the records of heaven (Lk 10:20). [Those with Christ, their prototype] are endowed with the qualities of the heavenly body ... incorruptible, glorious, powerful, and spiritual (1 Co 15:42-49) ... Paul does not pretend to understand or to explain what this transformation is in detail.” Quoted from John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 345.

spot on earth, beneath the earth, or separate from the earth, where the damned are fried and where the elect are refreshed.”²⁰

A More Modern Adaptation of Literal Biblical Eschatological Symbols

It would seem that the intent of the forceful words of Jesus in his parable of Lazarus and the “suffering” rich man is better translated from the literal interpretation of his (Jesus’s) eschatological symbols to more comprehensible and palatable language by such authors as John Ciardi (translator of Dante’s *Inferno*), “Hell is not *where* the damned are; it is *what* the damned are (*Inferno*, p. xiv), or John Milton who wrote in his *Paradise Lost* (1, 254-255), “The mind ... can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven,” or Feodor Dostoyevsky who says in *The Brothers Karamazov*, “What is hell? I maintain that it is the suffering of being unable to love ... In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus ... that is just [the rich man’s] torment,” or again Jean-Paul Sartre (in his play *No Exit*) who portrays the unbearable torment of loneliness, emptiness, selfishness and cruelty that evokes from one of the characters the realization, “So this is hell. I’d never have believed it. You remember all we were told about the torture-chambers, the fire and brimstone ... There’s no need for red-hot pokers. Hell is – other people,”²¹ and finally, T.S. Eliot in his play, *The Cocktail Party*²² has one of the selfish, hollow characters crying out, “Hell is oneself, / Hell is alone, the other figures in it / merely projections.” (Act I, scene 3).

²⁰ Phipps, 165.

²¹ Jean-Paul Sartre. *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (New York: Vintage International, 1989).

²² T. S. Eliot. *The Cocktail Party* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974).

Such interpreters would seem to suggest reasonably that the stark, polar opposites of the images of Heaven and Hell are better understood meaningfully when accepted as descriptions of qualities of life rather than actual places in the afterlife to which the departed are relegated as a final and endless state of either reward or punishment. Theologian Kenneth Foreman says,

Hell is within. A person does not discover he is in hell; he discovers hell in him ... Away-from God is a synonym for hell. It is only half a truth that "myself am hell" or that "hell is other people." Neither I nor others would be hell unless we were running away from God."²³

And so, both Heaven and Hell are spiritual qualities, regardless of the time, place, or world—the here or the hereafter—in which a person is living, the state or level of maturity of being to which he has either advanced or retreated . It is the state to which a person has grown and become. Any person at any given phase of life is "The Prodigal Child" who is still freely either walking away from the infinitely loving Source from which the child has freely decided to estrange himself/herself, or moving back toward that same Source with whom he/she wishes to be reconciled. The estrangement is the seed that gives birth to the reality of Hell, and the greater the estrangement the greater the reality of Hell becomes, and the greater, for the individual involved, the experience of the pain and torment of this monstrous reality that has been birthed and enabled to grow. It then makes easy sense to understand how Jesus who—once he was Christed, "The Father and I are one"—declared himself to be the way, the truth and the life, and a light to a world living in a darkness and blindness that impeded

²³ Kenneth J. Foreman. "Which Way Is Hell: Satan, Sartre, and the Scriptures." *Presbyterian Outlook*, September, 29, 1958.

the human person's ability even to realize that he/she is going the wrong way or to see how to get back on the right way. In our own modern-day jargon, Jesus might be heard to say, "Hey, guy! We have missed you; we do miss you; our Father is desperately missing you. You are going the wrong way! Let me show you how to get back on track!" And by so doing, Jesus enables the "Prodigal Child" to "come to his/her senses" thereby, by every step on the return journey—back from that exterior darkness (variously from whatever point he/she has distanced oneself from the Light) in which he/she had freely but short-sightedly chosen to wander—the "Prodigal Child" is extricating the self from the self-made Hell to which he/she had freely banished the self.

So therefore, life for all of us is an ongoing dynamic—a process of coming to one's senses or being enabled (as through Christ) to do so, of striving to embark upon the return journey through a slowly increasing awareness that that is what we really want to do, and set out freely to engage in that effort. But the journey is long and arduous, one that can involve progress that at times consists of gaining and at other times losing, of needing to be constantly reminded of the dynamic and the direction in which we are called and have decided to be moving.

But for us members of the human family, we are very much aware of the daunting reality of what we need to accomplish during the relatively short duration of our journey through "this valley of tears."²⁴ For some its duration is relatively short,

²⁴ Quoted from the concluding prayer to the Catholic rosary

and for others, as Scripture says, “eighty years if we are strong.”²⁵ Durations of time and sets of circumstances vary widely among individuals, leaving the human mind wondering about an evenly distributed fairness in the process that is supposed to have a common goal for all, regardless of differences. This is all the more so, especially in view of the traditional position of western churches that place such profound significance and finality on the saying, “It is ordained for man, once to die, and after that the Judgment.”²⁶ Perhaps more than any other single item of religious belief systems, this particular theory has created so much un-Godlike aggravation to the human spirit in the form of fear, anxiety, lack of peace, and indeed it is not easy to refute those who claim that it smacks of being merely an institutional instrument of control.

Such deeply ingrained beliefs have had and continue to have a very unsettling effect on believers in general—those conscious of their approaching death, those left in their grief following the death of a loved one, as well as all who are simply mindful of the inevitability of the unavoidable outcome of death for all. As mentioned earlier, there is nothing more certain than death. But the items of belief mentioned above tend to impose on people the frightening burden that the phenomenon of death is in some way a punishment, therefore one to be feared, and one that leaves in its wake (no pun meant) much that has pronounced, negative effects on the health, functioning, and overall well-being of the bereaved.

²⁵ Psalm 90:10.

²⁶ Hebrews 9:27.

Christian Belief and Practice of Engaging the Saintly Ones on the Other Side.

O Lord, support all all the day long, until the
 Shadows lengthen and the evening comes,
 And the busy world is hushed,
 and the fever of life is over and the work is done.
 Then, Lord, in Thy mercy, grant us safe lodging,
 And a holy rest and peace at last
 Through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen

—Cardinal John Henry Newman

A fundamental point for all Christian believers is that death is not a definitive end. This is reflected in the practice that Catholics and other Christian denominations have of maintaining a prayerful contact with “The Communion of Saints” as well as praying for those who are deceased. In earlier days, according to the eminent theologian Lawrence Cunningham, “the old requiem liturgy placed its main focus on death as a punishment, as an example to the living to get their lives in order, and to fear the coming judgment of God.”²⁷ In more recent times, the emphasis has been rightly placed on the Resurrection, the passage to the New Life promised by Christ (Rom. 5:21), as expressed by some early Christian writers in the use of the term, *transitus gloriae*.

Since the very beginnings of the Christian church, it has been the practice of the official church—in its teachings and practices of liturgy and piety—to cultivate the relationship between those of us still in this world and those who have died, in the dynamic known as “The Communion of Saints.” In every liturgy we consciously pray in the company of the Blessed Mother, the saints, the angels and the martyrs. In our devotional prayers we pray to and call upon Mary and the saints to intercede for us, to

²⁷ Lawrence Cunningham with Mary Smalara Collins. “How Catholics Keep Alive Their Connection with the Dead.” *U.S. Catholic*, November 1996, 8.

aid us, and to protect us. We do so, fully convinced that they can and do hear us.²⁸ At a Christian funeral, we pray that the deceased be at peace and that the deceased find rest and acceptance into the presence of God. One of the new Eucharistic prayers includes “for those who have died unloved and unmourned.” By so doing, we are affirming that our deceased loved are not beyond our caring or so separated from us that we cannot speak for them and with them. The Second Vatican Council (in the early 60s) said that the community of the church must be thought of not merely as a visible structure on earth but as a communion in love made up of those on earth, those who are being purified in and after death, and those who share in the glory of God, all a part of the “cloud of witnesses” (Heb. 12:1), and when we are bound together in charity and in praise of our God, we not only fulfill the deepest vocation of the church but experience a foretaste “of the liturgy of consummate glory.”²⁹

And so for believers there is a constant linkage between the declared saints as well as all the saintly ones, numbered among whom are our own deceased loved ones. It is with this conviction that this writer offers a prayer of one of his favorite authors, Father Andrew Greeley:

Give me the courage and faith to follow them
On the road of this life
And bravery I need when
I cross the boundary and join them on the way home.

²⁸ Among her last recorded words, St. Therese promised that she would spend her heaven doing good on earth, and St. Damien De Veuster likewise uttered similar words to his fellow lepers, shortly before his death, “I will intercede for all in the Leproserie.” Also, shortly before his death, St. Dominic assured his followers, “Do not weep, my children; I shall be more useful to you where I am now going, than I have ever been in this life.”

²⁹ *Lumen Gentium* VII.51.

A Proposal to Bring Clarity to some Language and Concepts

It would be enormously helpful to clarify the ideas on Judgment and the nature of the state of *Life after Death* in a way that would be complementary to our understanding of the nature of the God in whom we believe. At times, it would seem that instead of having an image that Scripture gives of ourselves as having been created in God's image and likeness, we have turned it about and made and projected an image of God that flows from our experiences as humans living and interacting from within the boundaries of time and space. From our experiences as people living in a society of many people, we have learned that there is a need for laws that are intended for the common good. An effort to ensure adherence to such needed laws leads logically to the establishment of ways and means of discouraging any from disregarding these laws or violating them. Thus the person violating these laws is punished in some form. Such course of action is considered logical, reasonable, and necessary. A somewhat limping corollary to this is the idea that Almighty God has created every thing that is good and holy, and god-like (including the god-like gift of free will), and "just Judge that He is," He has to address any violation of the good which He has created and administer His justice. Thus tradition would have us believe that God has created the human person, giving this person the one-time "gift" of living some number of days in the context of time and space, at the end of which God, in His accounting-mode with abacus in hand, takes stock of the quality of life lived by the individual being judged, and immediately determines and metes out a permanent, "just" reward or punishment – Heaven or Hell, and those who are neither worthy of Heaven nor deserving of Hell are generously

afforded the chance for some needed cleansing in a separate “state” called Purgatory, before being considered acceptable for admission to the higher realm of Heaven. Such is the perceived, neatly packaged version of a “logical and just” conclusion to the drama of human existence, and it is very much a part of the perception with which the faithful are indeed much preoccupied:

Thomas Aquinas described the three-tiered eschatology in this way: “... since a place is assigned to souls in keeping with their reward or punishment, as soon as the soul is set free from the body it is either plunged into hell or soars to heaven, unless it be held back by some debt, for which its flight must need be delayed until the soul is first of all cleansed.” Over the centuries most Roman Catholics have presumed that they belong in the middle category; consequently purgatory has been for them the center of afterlife concerns. A 1983 survey by U.S. Catholic of its readers showed that ninety-seven percent of those responding believed in heaven but only thirty-three percent expected to go straight there when they die. Fifty percent said they hoped to go to heaven after being purged of sin. Due perhaps to American optimism, only one percent of those responding said they expected to go to hell, even though eighty-six percent expressed belief in hell.³⁰

However, a version that would be more complementary to our understanding of the nature of God which would be more in keeping with the revealed truth of God’s wish “to draw all things to Himself,” so that eventually as Jesus expressed in his final prayerful discourse “they [all] may be one, even as you and I are one,” is the idea that instead of the word “Judgment,” a more appropriate word might be “inventory” or “assessment.” Instead of a final judgment that is followed by a reward or punishment of fixed and permanent duration, there is an assessment of the present state of progress of the individual soul who has just departed the physical world, followed by a proscribed course of action that would enable the individual to see how best to facilitate

³⁰ James Breig, “Beyond the Pearly Gates: What U.S. Catholic Readers Believe about the Afterlife,” *U.S. Catholic*, May 1983, 14-15.

the soul's continued journey back to God, once again to become one with and be embraced by God. It would seem that God wouldn't be happy with anything less. Thus we can join with St. Paul in declaring with equal boldness,

I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.³¹

It is not the intention of this paper to “re-invent the wheel,” so to speak, or to discredit the efforts of all those scholars down through the ages whose efforts sought to bring meaningful clarity to some of the more mysterious aspects of reality. It is merely an effort to bring further clarity to views that have prevailed for hundreds of years, hoping by doing so, to provide an overview of such matters that would better serve us in the context of present times, by enabling people to see the totality of reality in a perspective that is more meaningful for all involved, and the plan of our God is all the better served and implemented.

Humanity has made much obvious progress through science and technology. It has gained a better knowledge of the laws of nature. Humanity has gained new insights into itself from its scholarly discourse in philosophy and theology. Saintly men and women have grown in the spirit and shared with humanity insights into the world of the spirit, showing different ways that enable people to engage the presence of the Sacred that lead to greater unity with the Sacred. The church as an institution also has made progress. It has changed its previously intolerant attitude toward science and the exercise of humanity's god-given gift in its faculty of thinking freely and critically.

³¹ Romans 8:38-39.

Thus the institution that once ignored, ridiculed, and persecuted such pioneers in science and free thinking as Giordano Bruno, Copernicus, and Galileo among a host of others, has come to realize the shortsightedness of the past. Likewise its thinking with regard to end times has embraced changes; thus some of the thinking of such intellectual giants of the western world – Augustine and Thomas Aquinas – has changed down through the years, as is especially true of the doctrine of Limbo, that had emphatically stated that unborn fetuses or un-baptized children were not admissible to the high realm of Heaven, not even their mortal remains being allowed to be buried in so-called sacred ground.

It is against this broad background of thinking – philosophy, theology, spirituality, and eschatology—that this paper wishes to review the needs of those bereaved who are having to deal with the challenge of Grief Work—a challenge that just about everyone has to come to terms with at one time or another. It is the position of this paper that the immediate sense of separation, loss and its attendant grief on the part of the bereaved is further complicated by the challenge of not having a meaningful overview of the totality of life, as well as the inability to have with the deceased any communication that would bring much needed, clarifying answers to questions with which they are beset. The most profound and “haunting” concerns for the bereaved usually have to do with such things as verifying the continuity of life, understanding the dynamic of life in the hereafter and the involvement of the deceased in it, hearing of the well-being of the deceased, hearing of re-unions between the deceased and previously

deceased loved ones, and availing of the chance of taking care of unfinished business, carried over from the life shared between the bereaved and the deceased.

It is the focus of this paper to present for serious consideration the means with which such communication is made available to those bereaved people who would be open to availing of it. It is with the view that this phenomenon is to be considered as an adjunct to traditional means already in place and usually readily available, those ways that enable bereaved people to engage in such an essential dynamic as effective *Grief Work*.

Recent Movement toward Greater Openness to the Paranormal

Of all the different forms of paranormal activity, it would seem that the one with which humanity has been most interested and fascinated is the phenomenon of experiencing the other world, the world of the spirit, a world that is beyond our physical, three-dimensional world that is observable and quantifiable, as well as those yet undiscovered and uncharted areas which scientists admit are present in our world, waiting to be recognized and presented for verification by the scientific community. Down through the ages, humanity has had many ways of experiencing the presence of the World of the Spirit. In recent years some of these have been given contemporary names that have become increasingly more widely used and recognized, such as OBE and NDE. OBE stands for *Out of Body Experience* which refers to the phenomenon of the spirit part of the human person going out of and away from the physical body, while

remaining connected to it (by means of the so-called “Silver Cord”).³² This state of being can be induced, but more often than not it happens spontaneously during sleep or periods of deep meditation. It is sometimes referred to as Astral Travel or even in some instances as bi-location (as in the case of the famed Franciscan priest, Saint Padre Pio). Apparently there is no limit to distance in the experience of this phenomenon.

Sometimes this has been known to involve meeting with entities from the spirit World, including at times entities who are known to have been previously human but now deceased. NDE stands for *Near Death Experience* involving those who were either declared to be clinically dead for some (usually short) period of time or felt themselves to have died due to some series of circumstances. The significant point regarding this particular phenomenon is that the person who died (declared to be so or felt to have been dead) resumed living – they once again were verifiably fully alive as the human beings they had been, although definitely changed, especially in their perception of themselves and of reality in general. Invariably this change was effected by contact and communication they’d had with spiritual entities of a high order, during the experience of being dead. The essential content of the communication left them with an increased sense of peace and personal well being, a panoramic view and increased awareness of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all of reality, and the import of the difference one person’s life can have and is hoped to have within the sphere of that one person’s human life. Finally, the person is informed that it is not yet time for him or her to stay in this state of being; instead the person is firmly told that it

³² From Ecclesiastes 12:6-7, “or even the silver cord be loosed; then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; the spirit shall return to God who gave it.”

is necessary that they return to their former earth life and resume living as a member of the human family. Usually this latter command is accompanied with an exhortation to perform some specific work or duty, or to continue some work in which they had already been engaged,³³ something the person does with reluctance and regret at having to leave a state they had found to be wonderfully self fulfilling and “heavenly.” All in all, the experience of having an experience of death, followed by a resuming of one’s former life, leads to many transforming aftereffects and a whole new way of viewing life, death, and life after death:

The changes experienced by NDErs are usually both profound and lasting ... their aftereffects to be positive and life-enhancing ... NDErs believe they experienced first-hand what lies beyond death’s door leaves many of them fearless when they think about death ... with a conviction that death is not final and that a wonderful afterlife is real ... they believe they’ve been there ... experienced realms that are magnificent beyond anything on earth. And all the other NDE elements, including the out-of-body experience, encountering mystical light, reviewing one’s life, and reuniting with deceased loved ones, point to a continuing existence in joy and beauty that transcends physical death ... The great religions have always spoken to the belief in God and an afterlife. The evidence of near-death experiences points to an afterlife and a universe guided by a vastly loving intelligence. Near-death experiences consistently reveal that death is not an end but rather a transition to an after life.³⁴

Increased Recognition and Acceptance of After-Death Communication

In addition to the two above-mentioned phenomena and more closely aligned with the topic of this thesis is the phenomenon of a human being, fully alive as such, engaging in communication between this our known world and the World of the Spirit – either receiving or initiating and giving the communication. This phenomenon comes

³³ There are numerous books on accounts of this phenomenon among which are such better known ones by Dannon Brinkley, Raymond Moody, Kenneth Ring, Jeffrey Long, and Paul Perry. Please see bibliography.

³⁴ Jeffrey Long, with Paul Perry, *Evidence of the Afterlife: The Science of Near-Death Experiences* (New York: HarperOne. 2010), 176-202.

under the umbrella term of ADC – After-Death Communication. In this section we shall limit the discussion to communication between persons who are presently alive and persons who were once alive as members of humanity but are now deceased (excluding communication involving angels and spiritual entities who were never a part of humanity).

It is generally understood that, similar to praying, any human being is capable of communicating with the spirit world in a wide variety of forms – dance, music, song, the spoken word, mentally without the spoken word, or simply being comfortable in the presence of an other (not widely recognized or appreciated as a form of communicating in our so action oriented, noisy, busy, and unsettled style of modern-day living)- any of the ways in which we, as human beings, can be present to one another, communicating just about any sentiment we would wish at a given time. No doubt there is a general perception that such efforts at communicating on our part might not be received by the person for whom such efforts are made, since we don't detect or are incapable of detecting, or don't know how to detect a recognizable response.³⁵

Other Forms of After Death Communication

When speaking of or dealing with After-Death Communication, what usually comes to mind is communication that, first of all, either comes to us in any number of ways that are spontaneous and are without the help of any third party such as hypnotists, psychics, mediums or any device like the ouija board, or secondly,

³⁵ Of course, there is the method known as an *ouija board*, but such is not considered advisable for the majority of people, especially those not familiar with this dynamic, and there is no desire on the part of this writer to dwell on this or draw any further attention to it.

communication that comes to us through a person who has the gift of mediumship – a gift that enables the person with the gift to convey or pass on messages from deceased persons, now “beyond the grave” in the world of the spirit. And finally, there is the phenomenon of After-Death Communication that is induced (known as IADC), by means of a method discovered by psychotherapist, Dr. Alan Botkin, a method that is not affiliated with any particular religion – traditional or any church associated with Spiritualism or any particular philosophy or theology. This method is covered in some detail later on in this chapter, and a presentation on it shall be given by a certified practitioner as part Chapter 6.

Spontaneous After-Death Communication

The largest and most recent body of literature on the first of those mentioned above was the result of extensive research by Bill and Judy Guggenheim and published in 2000 in their book, *Hello from Heaven*.³⁶ Though a one time self-proclaimed “avowed materialist,” Bill was led to devoting himself with his wife to many years of researching the phenomenon of people who had received communication (spontaneously and by themselves) that may occur anytime and anywhere from deceased loved ones.

Surprised at the findings of the well known sociologist and pollster for the National Opinion Research Center, Fr. Andrew Greeley, that claimed “42% of American adults believe they have been in contact with someone who has died. And

³⁶ Bill and Judy Guggenheim, *Hello from Heaven: A New Field of Research (After-Death Communication: Confirms that Life and Love are Eternal)* (New York: Bantam Books, 1997).

67% of all widows believe they have had a similar experience,”³⁷ The Guggenheims pondered why such a high percentage of people having this experience were so reluctant to share their experience or “feel they must begin their accounts with disclaimers: ‘I don’t expect you to believe me ...’ or ‘You’ll probably think I’m crazy when I tell you my experience ...’ or ‘This is going to sound really weird ...’” The Guggenheims conclude that.

There is a logical explanation for this. Though most health-care professionals have heard of after-death communication, many of them are convinced ADCs are not genuine. Historically, psychologists, psychiatrists, bereavement counselors, members of the clergy, and others dismissed these experiences as hallucinations, delusions, or fantasies. The traditional viewpoint has been that ADCs are the result of wish fulfillment, imagination, magical thinking, or memories caused by grief. In fact, they have usually been called “grief-induced hallucination,”³⁸

There followed three significant events that led to the Guggenheims’ committing themselves to serious and extensive research in a field that had not previously been done to any great extent. Bill attended a week-long workshop given by the famed Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (researcher and author of the ground-breaking book, *On Death and Dying*) that included a presentation by Dr. Raymond Moody, another well known researcher in the field of *Death & Dying* and author of *Life after Life*; a strange voice led Bill to save his young son from death by drowning, and finally the voice of his deceased father exhorting him to “Do your own research and write your own book. This is your spiritual work to do.”³⁹ During a seven-year stretch of research

³⁷ Guggenheim, *Hello from Heaven*, 12.

³⁸ Guggenheim, *Hello from Heaven*, 13.

³⁹ Guggenheim, *Hello from Heaven*, 13.

they interviewed 2,000 participants and accumulated over 3,000 first hand accounts across the fifty states of America and ten Canadian provinces, involving

people who were from all walks of life and represent diverse social, educational, occupational, and economic backgrounds [and ranging] in age from an eight-year-old boy to a ninety-year-old widower ... all the people who participated in our research were in good health ... we excluded all people who admitted being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs at the time ... we conservatively estimate that at least 50 million Americans, or 20% of the population of the United States, have had one or more after-death communications. The percentages increase dramatically among bereaved parents, the widowed, bereaved children, and all others who have grieved the death of someone they love.”⁴⁰

Based upon their research, the authors present examples of after-death communications that are variously direct and spontaneous, which essentially means that each person is psychically sensitive and capable of being a medium-type receiver of that which

The spirits reportedly manifest in a variety of ways: by speaking; touching; displaying the face or entire body; exuding the odor of a favorite cologne; causing lights to flicker; or using the telephone, answering machine, or computer. More often, however, the percipient discerns the [spirit] through an intuitive sense of presence, in vivid dreams, or in meaningfully timed appearances of birds or butterflies. Most contacts occur within a year of the death. Typically the message is the simple reassurance that the deceased survived and the relationship continues: “I’m okay. I’m nearby. I love you.”⁴¹

The Guggenheims concluded that there are twelve types of after-death communication that are most frequently experienced:

⁴⁰ Guggenheim, *Hello from Heaven*, 19-21.

⁴¹ Susan Kwilecki. “Twenty-First-Century American Ghosts: The After-Death Communication; Therapy and Revelation from beyond the Grave.” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 19 (2009): 101

- **Sensing a Presence:** the most common form, often felt in the immediate aftermath of a death, but also oftentimes discounted as simply the imaginings of a grieving mind;
- **Hearing a Voice:** either an external voice or by mental telepathy (in one's mind) and could be one-way or could involve a two-way conversation;
- **Feeling a Touch:** any one or more of many forms of affection, nurturing, comforting, reassuring, and love such as a tap, a caress, a stroke, a kiss or even a hug;
- **Smelling a Fragrance:** some smell that is associated with the deceased loved one such as favorite cologne, shaving lotion, perfume, flowers, tobacco products, or favorite foods;
- **Visual Experiences:** could be either partially visual or completely visual in the form of a transparent mist or fully solid, and virtually always project an aura of healing and wholeness while expressing love and well-being with a easy and radiant smile;
- **Visions:** this is like seeing a 35 mm slide or a movie suspended in the air. And seen externally with open eyes or internally in the mind;
- **Twilight Experiences:** these occur while falling asleep, waking up, meditating or praying (in the alpha state);
- **ADC Experiences While Asleep:** these are very vivid, intense, colorful and felt to be more real than dreams. The presence of the deceased loved one is

experienced as really taking place, as in a visit. While sleeping one is more likely to be relaxed, open and receptive to this type of experience;

- **Out-of-Body ADCs:** usually occurs while sleeping or meditating that involves the leaving of one's body and visiting the deceased loved one where that person exists. Felt to be "more real than physical life," the person experiencing this finds the environment filled with all kinds of beauty – flowers, bushes, trees, butterflies – all in radiant light, and immersed in the spirit of happiness, love and joy;
- **Telephone Calls:** this may occur while sleeping or wide awake and involves hearing the voice of a deceased loved one, oftentimes sounding like it is coming from afar, with a message of short duration;
- **Physical Phenomena:** this could cover a wide variety of physical signs such as the blinking of lights, the turning on or off of mechanical devices such as radios, televisions, or stereos; items like photos or pictures being turned over or moved or items suddenly dropped in one's path, as well as the proverbial "things that go bump in the night."
- **Symbolic ADCs:** upon requesting a sign from a Higher Power to prove the continued existence of a deceased loved one, a survivor will actually receive such a sign, subtle or otherwise (could be discounted as mere coincidences) in the form of a butterfly, a rainbow, flowers, some species of birds or animals, or some inanimate object like a coin or a picture.⁴²

⁴² Adapted from Guggenheim, *Hello from Heaven*.

Conclusions from the Guggenheims' Research

Bill and Judy Guggenheim declare that from their research, they have found the purpose of all such forms of communication is to offer comfort, reassurance, and hope for those who are left behind and are dealing with the challenge of grieving, as well as offering the hope of an eventual reunion of both the survivor and the deceased, who is happy to communicate that he/she is alive and well and happy! Invariably, the people who have experienced this type of phenomena have received comfort and emotional support from it; anxiety, concern and fear of death are greatly minimized; negative emotions such as anger and guilt lessened or to a significant degree are resolved, and previously elusive feelings of much needed resolution and relief are experienced.

Answering the Need for Investigation, Research—Seeking Credibility

While there were members of the Spiritualist movement who proved to be respected and reputable mediums, fraud and charlatans abounded, unfortunately bringing disrepute to the whole dynamic. There were charlatans who saw the widespread fascination of people for it, and responded to this as a ripe opportunity awaiting their harvesting.⁴³ There were also individuals who apparently had a genuine gift of mediumship, but who on occasion resorted to some trickery to embellish their performance.⁴⁴ And of course there were always the cynic and skeptic who spared no

⁴³ In earlier years in England this practice of preying on a gullible public by fraudulent psychics and self-proclaimed mediums led to the 1735 Witchcraft and Vagrancy Act, which in 1951 was repealed and replaced by the Fraudulent Mediums Act.

⁴⁴ Examples – Palladino, Fox Sisters, Helen Duncan, Kate King, etc.

opportunity to discredit the whole focus of Spiritualism and all claims of communication with the world of the spirit.

The wide-spread swell of public interest in the phenomenon of mediumship that seemed to offer the possibility of communication with those who were deceased, coupled with the need to prove that not all mediums were charlatans and hoax-ers, and that there just might be some real truth and substance to the phenomenon, led some prominent, scientifically-oriented persons to embark on the effort to subject the phenomenon of mediumship to real, scientific investigation and research.

In 1882 in England, Sir William Crookes and F.W.H. Myers co-founded *The Society for Psychical Research* in order to make “an organized and systematic attempt to investigate that large group of debatable phenomena designated by such terms as mesmeric, psychical and Spiritualistic ... and to examine without prejudice or prepossession and in a scientific spirit those faculties of man, real or supposed, which appear to be inexplicable on any generally recognized hypothesis.” Crookes—considered to be the greatest scientist of his time, having discovered six chemical elements, including thallium—was a Fellow of the Royal Society, a very prestigious association of the most learned scientists elected by their peers; Myers was the author of the classic *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*. Other members of this scholarly group were professor of chemistry Robert Hare (1781-1858), professor Augustus de Morgan (1806-1871), Dr. A. Russell Wallace (1823-1903) co-discoverer with Charles Darwin of the *Theory of Evolution*, Frank Podmore of Oxford University, Dr. Gustave Geley and Stanley de Brath of the British College for Psychic Science,

Lord Arthur Balfour British Prime Minister (1902-05), and of course Conan Doyle investigator and proponent of Spiritualism.

In Europe from the early 1900s, other scientist including Baron von Schrenck-Notzing, Professor Charles Richet, Professor Eugene Osty, and Professor Gustav Geley were studying mediums and photographing appearance of people who claimed to be returning from the dead under controlled laboratory conditions. Their written reports, supported by the testimony of many skeptical scientists who acted as witnesses, showed that they had investigated and ruled out all possible sources of trickery and fraud. One hundred well-known scientists, all profoundly skeptical, and some openly hostile, declared themselves, without exception, completely convinced after having worked under the direction of Dr. Schrenck Notzing with his medium Willy Schneider (Geley 1927). Internationally known and powerfully influential psychiatrist Dr. Carl Jung admitted that metapsychic phenomena could be better explained by the spirit hypothesis than by another (*Jung, Collected Letters* 1:431)⁴⁵

The American Society for Psychical Research was founded in 1885. This group included such scholars as Williams James, known as the Father of American Psychology and James H. Hyslop, formerly Professor of Logic and Ethics at Columbia University, the inventor Thomas Edison (who experimented with mechanical means of contacting deceased persons, John Logie Baird, pioneer and inventor of the infra-red camera, who claimed, "I have witnessed some very startling phenomena under circumstances which make trickery out of the question," and George Meek who traveled all over the world to locate and establish research projects with the top medical doctors, psychiatrists, physicists, biochemists, psychics, healers, parapsychologists, hypnotherapists, ministers, priests and rabbis; he established his Metascience Foundation in Franklin, North Carolina, which sponsored the famous Spiricom

⁴⁵ Victor Zammit. *A Lawyer Presents the Case for the Afterlife: Irrefutable Objective Evidence*, 3rd ed. (Dee Why, N.S.W.: Gannell Pty, 2002).

research, and extensive demonstration two-way instrumental contact between persons on both side of the divide. The eminent Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross who directed extensive research on Death and Dying, became totally convinced of the continuity of life after physical death. She wrote, “Up until then I had absolutely no belief in an afterlife, but the data convinced me that there were not coincidences or hallucinations.” Her convictions were such that she ended up writing extensively on the topic in such books as *On Life After Death*, (1991), *The Facts of Life After Death* (1992), *Death is of Vital Importance: On Life, Death and Life After Death* (1995), and *The Wheel of Life* (1997). The world recognized authority on dying children, Dr. Melvin Morse who declared himself “an arrogant, critical-care physician ... with an emotional bias against anything spiritual” did an extensive, scientifically based study of dying along with an extensive study of all available literature on the subject, concluded:

There is a divine something which serves as a glue for the universe. When I review the medical literature, I think it points directly to evidence that some aspect of human consciousness survives death. Other researchers agree with me. Physician Michael Schroter Kunhardt, for instance, conducted a comprehensive review of the scientific literature and concluded that the paranormal capacities of the dying person suggest the existence of a time-and-space transcending immortal soul. Other researchers have reached the same conclusion. Be it through case studies of their own or research they have reviewed, there is in the scientific community a growing belief in the human spirit.⁴⁶

Also in America serious attempts at scientific research were undertaken by reputable institutions of higher learning such as Stanford University in 1911 (led by psychologist John Edgar Coover), Duke University in 1930 (led by psychologist

⁴⁶ Melvin Morse and Paul Perry. *Parting Visions: Uses and Meanings of Pre-Death, Psychic, and Spiritual Experiences* (New York: Villard Books, 1994), 190.

William McDougall and Joseph B. Rhine⁴⁷), the Parapsychological Association in Durham, North Carolina in 1957 (which became affiliated with the *American Association for the Advancement of Science* (AAAS) under the direction of anthropologist Margaret Mead. Until very recently (2007), Princeton University had for 28 years engaged in some serious research in this field through its Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Laboratory. Presently in the United States – apart from a number of privately funded research programs – there are two institutions of higher learning that are engaged in research in this field: The Division of Perceptual Studies at the University of West Virginia’s Department of Psychiatric Medicine that studies the possibility of survival of consciousness after bodily death, and the University of Arizona’s Veritas Laboratory that conducts laboratory investigation of mediums. The conclusions from the extensive research of this latter project, led by Dr. Gary E. Schwartz, merits further elaboration since it has more of a direct bearing on the topic of this thesis.

Gary E. Schwartz has a Ph.D. in personal psychology from Harvard University and served as a professor of psychology and psychiatry at Yale University, director of Yale Psychophysiology Center, and co-director of the Yale Behavioral Medicine Clinic, before joining the University of Arizona in 1988. There he became a professor of Psychology, Medicine, Neurology, Psychiatry and Surgery and director of its Human Energy Systems Laboratory. In 1993 he began his own personal search for evidence of

⁴⁷ Today the *Rhine Research Center* is still engaged in parapsychology research, stating that it “aims to improve the human condition by creating a scientific understanding of those abilities and sensitivities that appear to transcend the ordinary limits of space and time.”

the afterlife. Initially he was highly skeptical and kept his investigations secret. Working with a colleague and clinical psychologist, Dr. Linda Russek, Ph.D., Schwartz “started out with the hypothesis, the working assumption, that science can establish that love exists, that consciousness exists, and that survival of consciousness exists, in the same way that science can establish that gravity exists, that electrons exist, and that photons from ‘deceased’ stars continue to exist.”⁴⁸

With his hypothesis of the living soul, Gary Schwartz applies procedures of experimentation that no honest skeptic could argue with. He doesn’t start from an assumption that the subtle plane must be real, only from an openness that it might be. His specific interest ... it to explore and answer questions about the afterlife, and in particular whether we can communicate with the dead.⁴⁹

With the help of Dr. Julie Beischel, the William James Postdoctoral Fellow in Mediumship and survival Research, Schwartz has continued up to the present in investigating the talents of a number of mediums, including John Edward, George Anderson, Allison DuBois, Anne Gehman, Laurie Campbell, Susy Smith, Suzanne Northrop, Mary Occhino, and many others.

The task undertaken by Gary Schwartz was and continues to be a daunting one, that of taking on the exhortation of the eminent psychologist, William James, “In order to disprove the law that all crows are black, it is enough to find one white crow.” It would seem that both Dr. Schwartz and other researchers in this field are doing exactly that. In ensuring the strictest scientific controls, they have sought both to weed out any possibility of fraud and deception or those who are merely psychic entertainers or

⁴⁸ Gary E. Schwartz, *The Afterlife Experiments: Breakthrough Scientific Evidence of Life after Death* (New York: Atria Books, 2003), 11.

⁴⁹ Deepak Chopra as quoted in Gary E. Schwartz, *Afterlife Experiments*, xii.

mental magicians as well as prove the authenticity of those who have the real gift of mediumship, as proven through the quality of the information they provide through their mediumship.

Some Final Reflections on Mediumship

In the words of the well known medium, Robert Brown,

I have come to the conclusion that communicating with Spirit is not for everyone. Some people do not desire it, others are opposed to it, and some, on both sides of life, are simply not ready for it ... Apart from obtaining information, spirit communication can and does remove the fear of death, and in its truest form this is the greatest truth known to mankind. It can transform lives, and I believe ... it can help to heal the world.⁵⁰

Perhaps due to historical, cultural, religious or other influences, mediumship has been given a rather “bad rap.” Some people have some reservations regarding the dynamic of mediumship.

Perhaps due to historical, cultural, religious or other influences, mediumship has been given a rather “bad rap.” And so as a conclusion to this section on Mediumship, it would seem helpful to offer, in review, some pertinent reminders of points associated with the age-old dynamic of mediumship.

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament have numerous examples of communication between the two worlds—the many instances of God sending His messengers, His angels to our world: the angels coming to Mary, Zechariah, the Wise Men, the shepherds, to Paul and Peter, etc. Then also we read the account of the Transfiguration in which Jesus is seen communicating with the deceased Moses and

⁵⁰ Robert Brown. *We Are Eternal: What the Spirits Tell Me about Life after Death* (New York: Warner Books, 2003) 167, 172.

Elijah. We read of the accounts of Jesus communicating with and bringing back from the dead the spirits of Lazarus, the widow's son of Naim, the centurion's daughter, etc. Jesus regularly engaged in communicating with spirits, sometimes admonishing them and ordering them to depart from persons whom they had taken over. And then of course, there is Jesus himself coming back from the dead. Jesus was a Master of the paranormal. He was the psychic medium *par excellence*. Anything one has heard about, or experienced in the field of paranormal psychic activity – Jesus did all of those to an extraordinary degree.

And most importantly, in his final discourse, Jesus said to his disciples whom he was sending out to carry on his work, "You shall do things as great as these and even greater." In John 14:12, we read of Jesus saying, "Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father." Again in Mt. 7:15-20, Jesus says, "Beware of false prophets ... by their fruits you shall know them ... Every good tree bears good fruit ... A good tree cannot bear bad fruit. So by their fruits you shall know" (see chapter 4 for some examples of the fruits of mediumship). In Mt. 9:38-41, we read of John saying to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw a man driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he is not one of us. Jesus replied, 'Do not prevent him. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. For whoever is not against us is for us. Anyone who gives a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.'" The Book of Deuteronomy (30:20) of the Old Testament proclaims that true religion is how you live. In Luke

6:46, we read of Jesus teaching that your religion is what you do, to think on the precepts of Christ and do them is the hallmark of a true Christian (Phil. 4:8, 9), as long as we remember that it is in Christ “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

It would seem appropriate to end with a quote from a Monsignor Thomas Hartman, director of radio and television for the Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York, who had had a private reading with the medium George Anderson (himself a Catholic), during which a deceased priest friend and colleague whom he had taken care of during his fatal illness, came through. While as a guest with George on a *Psychic Channels* program entitled “Theology and Parapsychology,” and during a discussion on the Church’s reluctance to embrace the type of healing work that George sincerely does, Monsignor Hartman responded,

I think one of the things that Church leaders are concerned about is, in our culture, faddism and commercialism. As I see it, life is difficult. Spirituality is difficult. Marriage is difficult. The commitment to any way of life is difficult. And if someone were to come to George, who has the gift, just as a panacea, as a placebo, to remove themselves from the struggle of everyday life, I think that they would be mistaken. What we’re all trying to do is figure out, how can I take the spirit that is within and allow my spirit to become more important than anything else in my life? It’s the spirit that energizes us. It’s the spirit that activates us. It’s the spirit that defines how we interrelate with other people.

I never told you this [before]. But I had been wrestling with the idea, why do people pray for someone who’s dead? If they’re with God, and God takes care of them, what more is needed? In the most spiritual moments of my life, I still need a hug and a kiss and all that. When people die and are with God, I believe they still need a connection with this world, to know that there are people who love them.⁵¹

⁵¹ Joel Martin and Patricia Romanowski Bashe, *We Don’t Die: George Anderson’s Conversations with the Other Side* (New York: Berkley Books, 1988) 224.

After Death Communication Apart from Mediumship or Spiritualism

To the previous ways just mentioned above, of establishing and engaging in After-Death Communication, a recently new, surprising and most welcome method has been added. It was accidentally discovered and named IADC – Induced After-Death Communication – by Dr. Alan Botkin. In the 1980s, Dr. Botkin completed his studies as a Doctor of Psychology, ending as he says, “my formal studies ... in the comfortable familiarity of a cognitive-behavioral paradigm ... [with] the instincts and skepticism of the scientist ... Anything I believe must be verifiable.”⁵² After graduating he began working in a Chicago-area Veterans Administration hospital with patients suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).⁵³ For the first eight years in this work, he utilized that in which he had been trained, a particular cognitive behavioral model known as “exposure therapy” in which the patient is repeatedly exposed to reminders of their traumatic experiences in a safe, supportive environment. The objective and hope of this method was to bring about—over time—a decrease in the intensity of the patient’s emotional responses. And while this method made sense in theory, the actual results were only modest and frustratingly did not have a lasting effect.

Something New: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

And so to the delight of Dr. Botkin and his colleagues in this field of treating patients with PTSD, in 1980 a psychologist, Dr. Francine Shapiro, Ph.D. introduced a

⁵² Alan Botkin with R. Craig Hogan. *Induced After-Death Communication: A New Therapy for Healing Grief and Trauma* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing, 2005), 2.

⁵³ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder “is an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Traumatic events that may trigger PTSD include violent personal assaults, natural or human-caused disasters, accidents, or military combat. People with PTSD have persistent frightening thoughts and memories of their ordeal and feel emotionally numb, especially with people they were once close to. They may experience sleep problems, feel detached or numb, or be easily startled.” —National Institute of Mental Health.

welcome, new therapeutic technique which she named EMDR – Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. It was somewhat similar – at least in part – to that which had been known as REM – Rapid Eye Movement – that all of us experience while dreaming as we sleep; “It is well known that during dream sleep, our brains process information at a higher rate than when we are awake. It has been assumed that this increased processing during sleep causes the rapid, back-and-forth eye movement.”⁵⁴ Dr. Shapiro took this phenomenon and applied it to a person who is fully awake:

The psychotherapist ... moves his or her hand, with index and next finger extended, left and right in front of the patient on the same level as the patient’s eyes. While focusing on the psychotherapist’s hand and keeping the head stationary, so only the eyes move left and right rhythmically, the patient attends to a disturbing thought, feeling, sensation, or image. During a set of eye movements, the patient experiences a spontaneous, natural reprocessing of the thought, feeling, sensation, or image. After a number of sets of eye movements, patients typically report psychological breakthroughs that normally would take months to achieve.⁵⁵

In contra distinction to the previous efforts with the “exposure therapy” paradigm, this new method brought to the field two most important factors: Firstly, the traumatic experience is uncovered and fully accessed, and secondly, the process “allows the patient to process the memory so that the reliving component of the memory is eliminated, and the patient can then remember the traumatic event in a more abstract way.”⁵⁶ Further studies and research in neuroscience pointed to how EMDR actually affects brain function that leads to the positive and lasting results that were so

⁵⁴ Botkin, *Induced After-Death Communication*, 4.

⁵⁵ Botkin, *Induced After-Death Communication*, 3.

⁵⁶ Botkin, *Induced After-Death Communication*, 4.

welcomed by Botkin and his colleagues.⁵⁷ They introduced it into their practice along with over 30,000 other professional mental health providers throughout the world, and it has been widely endorsed by a number of bodies of health care professionals.⁵⁸

Core-focused EMDR: A Modification of Shapiro's Standard EMDR

Dr. Botkin came to realize that EMDR was especially helpful in treating grief, particularly traumatic grief – that state in which the initial shock and numbing (covered in chapter 2) is followed by intense emotions such as anger, guilt and a deep sadness (emphasis on the depth of the sadness as being deeply embedded). Ordinarily over time, some acceptance of their loss is achieved, yet Botkin claims that it is never fully resolved. He came to believe firmly that the core of grief is profound sadness and that such emotions as anger, guilt and regret are simply a part of an innate defense mechanism that glosses over and helps the patient from feeling and dealing with the painful sadness at the deep core of the patient's being. And so Dr. Botkin focused his efforts on removing all the outer emotion-laden layers such as the anger, rage, and guilt so as to get to that deep core of sadness, the very center that is most in need of healing. He called this “core-focused EMDR.” Dr. Botkin was ever so happy to declare that

When we were able to process the core sadness fully, guilt and anger tended to vanish without even being directly addressed. It demonstrated that guilt and

⁵⁷ “It was found that when subjects accessed a traumatic memory prior to EMDR, deep structures in the brain that represent the sensory and emotional components of the traumatic event were activated in isolation. After EMDR treatment, however, areas of the brain that hold the memory in a more abstract or symbolic manner were also activated. ... prior to EMDR, when people access a traumatic memory, they feel they are re-experiencing the event [and feel distressed]; after EMDR, they are able to remember the event in a more abstract and emotionally detached manner.” – Levin, Lazrove and van der Kolk – Botkin and Hogan, *Induced After-Death Communication*, 4.

⁵⁸ “EMDR has been endorsed by American Psychological association, Division 12, Clinical Psychology, International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, Northern Ireland Department of Health, United Kingdom Department of Health, Israeli National Council for National Health, and U.S. Veterans Administration/Department of Defense” – Botkin, *Induced After-Death Communication: A New Therapy for Healing Grief and Trauma*, 6.

anger serve only to protect patients from experiencing deep sadness. I also found that patients responded better when they closed their eyes briefly after a set of eye movement, so I instructed all patients to close their eyes ... The results were very successful and occurred even more rapidly than with standard EMDR.⁵⁹

Dr. Botkin, his colleagues, and their patients enjoyed a number of years of utilizing this “core-focused EMDR” that Botkin called “a wondrous gift to our patients and us,” until one particular day during the course of a normal session with a patient, the usual dynamics of such a session using core-focused EMDR “took me and the patient into a realm I didn’t know existed.”⁶⁰

Induced After-Death Communication: A New Phenomenon

The patient had been suffering from an acute case of PTSD dating back 28 years previously to his deployment during the Vietnam War. Having befriended and developed a very close relationship with a 10-year-old Vietnamese, orphaned girl, the patient experienced two traumatic events. His plans to adopt the girl named Le and bring her back to the U.S. were thwarted by orders from headquarters that directed all orphaned Vietnamese children to be transported to a distant Catholic orphanage; while saying goodbye to her as she was being loaded onto a truck, she was unexpectedly shot and killed. As he cradled her bloody, mangled body, his comrades had to pull it from him for burial. There followed much anger and rage and self destructive behavior, especially taking on very dangerous missions on a regular basis. Upon his return to the U.S., he fathered a daughter but generally avoided her because she reminded him of the

⁵⁹ Botkin, *Induced After-Death Communication: A New Therapy for Healing Grief and Trauma*, 8-9.

⁶⁰ Botkin, *Induced After-Death Communication*, 10.

earlier traumatic loss of the Vietnamese girl. For almost 28 years, he lived a life of seclusion in his basement with virtually no contact with his own family.

In this particular therapy session with Dr. Botkin, after the usual steps of core-focused EMDR had been followed and the final request had been given to close his eyes, a truly amazing and totally unexpected transformation occurred. The tears that had flowed as a result of the 28-year-old trauma that had been “uncovered and accessed” simply suddenly stopped, and instead he smiled, then giggled, and when he opened his eyes, he was aglow with a sense of obvious well-being:

When I closed my eyes, I saw Le as a beautiful woman with long black hair in a white gown surrounded by a radiant light. She seemed genuinely happier and more content than anyone I have ever known. She thanked me for taking care of her before she died. I said ‘I love you, Le,’ and she said ‘I love you too, Sam,’ and she put her arms around me and embraced me. Then she faded away.⁶¹

Dr. Botkin was at a loss to understand or explain the transformation. At first he thought that it must have been a grief hallucination; or he worried that the patient’s “intense stress of his traumatic memories had somehow compromised his ability to differentiate reality from fantasy.”⁶² But then the same results occurred the following day with another patient, and then again and again – six altogether in the course of three weeks.

The scientist in Dr. Botkin led him to review his notes, and upon doing so he discovered that for those with this now unexplained experience (response), he had given an extra set of eye movements without any specific instructions. He theorized

⁶¹ Botkin, *Induced After-Death Communication*, 11.

⁶² Botkin, *Induced After-Death Communication*, 12.

that once the sadness had been uncovered and addressed thus lessening its intensity, and the distracting emotions were no longer focused on, the extra or additional set of eye movements without instructions seemed to open the patient to this strange but apparently natural experience. He called it the “receptive mode.”

Next Dr. Botkin consciously and deliberately administered his now modified procedure with another PTSD patient, and again with the same results.

Dr. Botkin then re-read Raymond Moody’s book, *Life after Life* and recognized similarities between the experiences of Moody’s subjects of NDE (Near Death Experience) and the experiences of his patients. Continuing his search, he then read Bill and Judy Guggenheim’s book *Hello from Heaven* (mentioned earlier in this chapter), and he realized that their descriptions of ADC were virtually the same in essential content with those of his own patients.⁶³ And so he decided that the most appropriate name for the new phenomenon he had discovered with his patients was Induced After-Death Communication.

Later on, Dr. Botkin did a follow-up contact with his patients – both the very first one to have experienced IADC as well as the first one intentionally induced – and found that their transformation had lasted over an extended period of time. “The experience was changing patients’ lives in a single session, and the effect was holding up over time.”⁶⁴ Furthermore, Dr. Botkin began sharing his IADC therapy with more

⁶³ Of this Botkin says, “The [Guggenheims’] descriptions of ADCs were identical to my patients’ descriptions of their experiences, except that the ADCs the Guggenheims described always occurred randomly and spontaneously.” Botkin, *Induced After-Death Communication*, 18.

⁶⁴ Botkin, *Induced After-Death Communication*, 19.

and more of his colleagues, all of whom upon administering this new form of therapy were able to replicate the same type of transformation in their patients.

Finally in appropriate closing words of Botkin “It doesn’t matter what you believe, what we believe, or even what the experiences believe. The IADC experiences ... in thousands of patients result in dramatic life changes that heal grief and trauma in a very short time and are sustained long-term.”⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Botkin, *Induced After-Death Communication*, 167.

Chapter 4: “By Their Fruits You Shall Know”

Introduction

We know very well from experience that death is perhaps the single most challenging event in the whole human drama. It has wide ranging effects on the totality of the human person – mentally, psychologically, emotionally, socially and spiritually. Each death has its own uniqueness with its own set of variables such as the relationship between the survivor and the deceased both in the past and/or the more recent time frame leading up to the death; the circumstances of the death; the maturity and life-view of the survivor at the time of the death including social, cultural, religious and spiritual components that have a bearing on life, death and Afterlife; the perceived view and understanding of the approach to life, death and Afterlife of the deceased.

On the individual level the person surviving the loss of a loved one has to deal and come to terms with the sense of loss and emptiness left by the death. And the factors mentioned above will have a bearing on the type and degree of loss being felt by the survivor. There is always some degree of deep down anxiety that is felt when having to deal with the idea of finality in any form, and this is most evident in the context of death. In the words of Char Margolis, “It’s not just the fear of death – it’s death as obliteration, death with nothing beyond it. We fear our loved ones are lost to us forever when they die. Most of all, we fear we will vanish when our time comes.”¹ In his poem, “Spring and Fall: To a Young Child,” the Jesuit poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, states:

¹ Char Margolis, *Questions from Earth, Answers from Heaven* (New York: St. Martin’s Paperbacks, 2000), 45.

Margaret, are you grieving
 Over Golden grove unweaving?
 Leaves, like the things of man, you
 With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
 Ah! as the heart grows older
 It will come to such sights colder
 By & by, nor spare a sigh
 Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
 And yet you will weep & know why.
 Now no matter, child, the name:
 Sorrow's springs are the same.
 Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
 What héart héard of, ghóst guéssed:
 It is the blight man was born for,
 It is Margaret you mourn for.²

The “blight” of death leaves the survivor not only grieving the loss of the departed but also the uncertainty and fragility of one’s own life and future.

There are the unsettling and deep, down anxiety-evoking questions regarding the existence of an Afterlife and the continuity of life as affecting not only oneself (the survivor) but also that of the deceased; the challenge of reconciling the compassionate, unconditional, ever-loving God of Jesus with a distorted image of the Old Testament God of wrath and judgment, with its attendant dynamic of a permanency of reward and punishment. There is the concern for the state of being of the deceased and anxiety about the hope for and possibility of eventual re-unions between the survivor and the deceased as well as with all the other loved ones who had preceded the recently deceased.

Oftentimes there is that which Dr. Linda G. Russek calls “the unrelenting mantra of ‘What if?’”³ – questions about the circumstances that led to the death and how the

² *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems and Prose* (Penguin Classics, 1985),
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173665> (accessed April 26, 2010).

³ Allison DuBois, *Don't Kiss Them Good-bye* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), introduction.

survivor could have altered the outcome had he or she been more attentive to signs that seem obvious in retrospect, as well as feelings of regret for not having done this or that or the other. There may be feelings of regret for not having been present at the time of the death, feelings of regret for not having expressed forgiveness, for not having asked for forgiveness, for not having expressed one last “I love you,” regret for the self perception of not having been sufficiently caring during a long, tiresome, drawn-out illness or even for having wished that such an illness would come to an end, regret for having been burdened with the restrictions and demands of being the main care-provider to a person with a protracted illness or disability leading up to the death. And there is oftentimes the survivor’s anger – against God, for taking a loved one too soon, too early, too quickly; or having had too long an illness or disability, or having had to endure the awful stages of some frightening disease, or the circumstances of a horrific accident, or allowing the loved one to be the victim of violence or a natural disaster; anger at the deceased for things done/said or things not done/unsaid while the person was still alive; anger at the deceased for having committed suicide and leaving the survivor alone or with the sudden responsibilities of handling home, work or raising a family.

The benefits from spirit communication through mediums are many and richly varied. One need only tune into the myriad of published stories that have been recorded through the mediumship of some of the better known psychics (mediums)⁴ such as John Edward, James van Praagh, George Anderson, Lisa Williams, David Brown, Neil

⁴ There is a difference between a psychic and a medium. A psychic may have any one or more of a variety of gifts in the field of the paranormal. A psychic might not have the gift of mediumship. But all mediums are psychic.

Mathews, Gordon Smith, Colin Fry, Sylvia Browne, Sue Brotherton, and Peter Close.⁵ Time and time again, their stories reflect stirring examples of relationships or painful personal grief that was healed—a concern or anxiety or the sense of lonely, painful loss was eased; a fear erased, a misunderstanding clarified, negative emotions defused, “burned bridges” restored, love rekindled or the awareness of the bereaved is awakened to the fact that the love never died but remains a vibrant connecting force between the deceased and bereaved, needed forgiveness is refreshingly established, and a comforting, deep-down peace and sense of personal well-being is once more restored to the mind, body, and spirit of the bereaved, making living in “this valley of tears” once more not only tolerable but even enjoyable. Oftentimes one hears such bereaved refer to their awakened awareness of and appreciation for the sentiments expressed in the song, “You’ll Never Walk Alone!”⁶

Examples of the Healing Power of After Death Communication

The following are some wonderful examples of the type of healing, wholesome dynamic just mentioned above from some of the more recently published books of this genre by mediums James van Praagh, George Anderson, and Suzane Northrop.

The Dynamic of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a need that is widely felt both on the part of the bereaved as well as on the part of the deceased. Oftentimes because of things said or done, things left

⁵ I have personally known Sue Brotherton and Peter Close for more than 20 years. Sue is an ordained Christian minister and is an extraordinarily gifted medium; Peter is an internationally acclaimed medium. Also I have personally known scores of people whose grief was significantly lessened or dissolved and inner peace restored as a result of the communication with their deceased loved ones through the compassionate mediumship of both Sue and Peter, as well as that of George Anderson.

⁶ From the 1945 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, *Carousel* and the 1963’s most successful performance in the recording by Gerry & the Pacemakers.

unspoken or not done, due to a variety of reasons such as stubbornness, estrangement, or the lack of time due to the suddenness of the death, there are deeply felt feelings of regret or guilt. Mediumship provides a means of communication that enables the grieved parties to say what they hadn't had a chance to say, or for some reason, were not able to say in seeking and bringing about forgiveness. When this occurs, much healing and great relief and comfort is the welcome result, as evidenced in the following examples:

Forgiveness and Love from the Other Side

Jenny, a born again Christian (conservative) whose son Chris had been gay and died from AIDS. The mother had disowned him, having judged him to be living in sin and going against God's will. Since then she had had deep regret, had re-examined her life, her beliefs and realized her church had misled her with their information. Thereafter she committed her self to working for AIDS causes. Her son asked the aunt to "Tell mom, 'I love her'"⁷

Forgiveness from the Victim of a Senseless Crime

Alfonso Melia, a young man who had been fatally beaten because of his race and his accent, came through to the mother of the young man who had murdered him. He wanted the mom to know that he had forgiven her son, and that he visits her son on death row, trying to help him.⁸

Forgiveness Requested from the Other Side, Enabling Forgiveness on this Side.

A man named Earl came through for Trudy who was very angry at Earl for having swindled her and her husband and many others out of their savings. Earl expressed his

⁷ Van Praagh, *Unfinished Business: What the Dead Can Teach Us about Life*, 30.

⁸ Van Praagh, *Unfinished Business: What the Dead Can Teach Us about Life*, 191.

deep regrets and told Trudy that he was trying to make amends and had tried to help her and her husband Joe out – how he had influenced a specific doctor to get off on the wrong floor of the hospital where Joe was dying because his doctors had misdiagnosed him. Dr. Watkins, though thinking he was seeing some other patient, immediately discovered what was wrong and gave the correct diagnosis, thus saving Joe’s life. Trudy’s response was, “Tell Earl not to worry anymore. I forgive him. Thank him for giving me back my Joe.”⁹

Re-Union of Twins Through forgiveness

The twins had been estranged for ten years prior to the death of one of them. The deceased twin and Van Praagh were able to put the whole story of their lives together into perspective in a very meaningful way. The deceased twin begged her sister to forgive her. Van Praagh said, “She really needs you to forgive her...not only for her sake, but for yours. This anger you have is beginning to affect you.” The matter was clarified and the process of forgiveness was set in motion, and eventually it led to a re-union and reconciliation between the son of the deceased and her sister.¹⁰

Forgiveness and much Needed Healing is Accomplished.

A deceased mother communicates with her son. Both she and her parents send their love. The mother’s spirit is unsettled because she had left this world still holding a grudge against her sister who apparently had been jealous. The mother wished and need to make amends and asked the son to facilitate this matter. Even though the mother

⁹ Van Praagh, *Unfinished Business: What the Dead Can Teach Us about Life*, 34-37.

¹⁰ Van Praagh, *Unfinished Business: What the Dead Can Teach Us about Life*, 83-87.

hadn't started the fight, she wanted her apology to be communicated to her sister, through the son, in the form of a letter.

The son did write and send a letter apologizing for both his mom and himself, but it came back unopened. "Several months later, he was driving to the store, and a stray dog ran in front of his truck ... He called the number on the dog's collar ... the dog belonged to his aunt's daughter. ... When he went to return the dog, his aunt was there [having a birthday party]. Jeffrey was able to explain about the letter he wrote. His aunt said that she never got it. She told [him] how upset she was about how she had left things with [her sister]. She told him she wanted to make things right again ... His aunt was so happy to learn about her sister." Furthermore the aunt arranged for Jeffrey, who was unemployed, to get a job from someone whom she knew.¹¹

The Easing of Concern and Healing of Guilt Following a Suicide

Following a suicide, invariably there is much regret, concern and guilt on the part of the bereaved. There is regret in believing that the bereaved should have recognized and anticipated some signs of the level of distress in the life of the deceased, thereby being of help to the deceased at the point of crisis, thus averting the drastic and final action of the person who died by suicide. There are usually many questions about why the deceased took such a drastic course of action. The following examples point to the healing benefit that comes from communication from some of those suicide victims:

¹¹ Van Praagh, *Unfinished Business: What the Dead Can Teach Us about Life*, 155.

The Healing of Guilt Following a Suicide

Theresa is a young woman whose brother committed suicide. Shortly before he did so, he had called; she had not answered the phone knowing from experience that he probably was high on drugs again. Because of this she blamed herself and felt deeply guilty for not having been more responsive. The brother came through in the reading and told her not to blame herself; it was his own doing; he had done so before, and had come back to this life to try to work things out once more, again unsuccessfully. He thanked her for her prayers, and ended with “I love you Pretty.” Van Praagh communicated to her, “Your brother wants you to know you did nothing wrong. He had to find out for himself. If you want to do something for him, please forgive yourself. He doesn’t like to see you in pain. Theresa’s response was, “My dream has come true. I spoke to my brother, and I feel better.”¹²

The Author’s Reading Regarding a Suicide of a Colleague

The author, during a reading with the medium Peter Close, received a communication from a deceased colleague who had died by his own hand. The colleague thanked the author for his prayers and those of other friends. He explained some of the distress that led him to take such drastic action in taking his own life. He went on to say that when he made the transition, with the realization that he had done something that was not good and had been condemned by the church as one of the worst sins one could commit, he fully expected and dreaded a harsh judgment that he had been brought up to believe would be forthcoming from a God of retribution. Instead he found no judgment

¹² Van Praagh, *Unfinished Business: What the Dead Can Teach Us about Life*, 11-13.

(other than himself), and he experienced a warm welcome from many of his loved ones who had preceded him in death at various times in the past. He more fully realized the import of the mistake he had made by ending his life on earth. Furthermore, he realized that he would have to come to terms with the foolishness of his rash action, but he also became aware that he would have available to him all necessary spiritual help that would enable him to continue to grow as a spiritual being. While there was a growing regret for the mistakes he had made, there was also a great relief in the awareness of an all-embracing, non-judgmental acceptance of him, as well as the invitation to and the necessary help for continued growth toward ever higher levels of spiritual advancement. For the author, this was indeed very comforting, in an intensely personal way.

Belief in the Continuity of Life—Life beyond Death.

Oftentimes bereaved people have concerns about the continuity of life. They either have doubts themselves about the existence of an Afterlife, or they are concerned about the deceased who did not believe in a life after death. Clarification on this matter through communication through a medium brings great relief, comfort and peace.

The Atheist Who Came to Believe

A Dr. Grossman's daughter Ilene was concerned about her deceased father who had been a staunch atheist, ever since he had lost most of his family in the Holocaust during World War II. Her father had been killed instantly in a collision with a truck. Through the medium, Dr. Grossman communicated the following, "I believed death was the end, this is all there was and it's over...In life everything had to be proven to me. Proof had to precede acceptance. [But] eventually ...at some point, I realized I wasn't dead. At that

moment I became cognizant that I was being cared for and looked after by loved ones and family: my mother, grandmothers and grandfathers from both sides, and my brother who had died young. What a re-union!”¹³

Fear of Death: “He Had It all Wrong”

The spirit of Martin came through to his daughter. He had grown up under the influence of a very overprotective mother, which left him filled with uncertainty and fear, including a deep fear of death and did not believe in an Afterlife. When he died he was pleasantly surprised to see his father, mother and brother welcoming him into the Afterlife with his mother apologizing for having taught him to be terrified of life. He further shared that he had always wanted to be a lawyer but had been too timid and afraid of going for it, but was now glad for having a second chance – influencing the daughter to go for it, something she was in the process of deciding to give up because she herself was afraid. He finished by communicating, “And freedom...Because once and for all you love yourself enough to break the family chain of fear.”¹⁴

Healing for Complicated (Chronic) Grief

In the aftermath of the death of a loved one, especially a sudden death, the bereaved can become immersed and stuck in their grief, unable to integrate the loss into their lives or continue to engage life in a fuller, healthy manner. They are unable to move on. In such instances, communication from the deceased loved one releases them from the rut of their grief, freeing them to “pick up and carry on” and actively and creatively re-enter the general, day-to-day flow of life.

¹³ Suzane Northrop, *Séance: Healing Messages from Beyond* (New York: Dell, 1994), 123-26.

¹⁴ Van Praagh, *Unfinished Business: What the Dead Can Teach Us about Life*, 54.

Freedom from Complicated (Chronic) Grief

There was the spirit of Karen who came through to her living husband Frank who was stuck and moping in his grief. Providing information proving her identity, Karen gently scolded him saying, “You should know better than that.” Van Praagh insisted, “She is trying to help you experience life once again, but is having a hard time because you are stuck.”¹⁵ She then leads him to Marcie whom they both had known years previously. After promising to honor her request, Frank does meet Marcie and later marries her.

The Continued Interest and Love of the Deceased for the Bereaved

In the loneliness of their grief, the bereaved experience the absence of their loved one as an intense and aching void, and they often wonder whether the deceased continues to be interested in them (the bereaved) and love them. Needless to say, any communication that would assure them that the deceased loved one does, indeed, continue to be interested in and have strong love for the bereaved whom they left behind, would leave them greatly comforted and lead to much needed healing. Oftentimes, deceased loved ones will communicate their continued concern for the well being of the bereaved and at times offer timely advice regarding some issues facing the bereaved.

From the Spirit World: Recognition and Thanks

The spirit of a man comes through to his brother (Mason), thanking him for the help he had been to him (the deceased). James spoke for him, “You taught him how to be kind and considerate when he wouldn’t otherwise have been. He wasn’t one to show

¹⁵ Van Praagh, *Unfinished Business: What the Dead Can Teach Us about Life*, 47.

compassion.” The deceased brother and some friends in spirit communicated their thanks to Mason, “they learned a lot from you about people. They can see how they judged people while you did not ... One of them is telling me that you are very spiritual, but not in a religious way. They can feel your love, so they come and visit you a lot.”¹⁶

Husband Offers Wife His Regret for His Dissipative Life and Gives Advice

Cliff, the husband, admitted his regret for his cheating and his lying, at his work. His misbehavior had acquired for him jewelry, champagne, boats, cars, and stacks of money, but when he got to the other side, he wasn't happy and he regretted his overcharging and cheating his clients. He begs his wife not to do what he did, and advised her to donate his ill-gotten money.

Later on, the wife wrote to von Praagh, “I didn't want to listen to Cliff. I was caught up in my house, car, clothes, and material possessions. It was one way to soothe the pain of losing both [my husband and son]. I met a man and married, but he was just like me ... I learned a good lesson from him. He swindled me out of my inheritance and left the country. I should have listened to cliff and started a charity ... I speak to cliff all the time now. It was a costly price to pay, but I think I get it now.”¹⁷

Deceased Grandma Offers Advice to Her Teenage Grandson

A teenager, accompanied by his skeptic father, attended a presentation by medium George Anderson, and toward the end of the show, George discerned a spirit entity that went to the teenager. The spirit was that of an elderly female who provided some accurate details that established her as the teenager's late grandmother. Then she went

¹⁶ Van Praagh, *Unfinished Business: What the Dead Can Teach Us about Life*, 149.

¹⁷ Van Praagh, *Unfinished Business: What the Dead Can Teach Us about Life*, 132.

straight to the business of her visit, referring to the fact that the teenager was hanging out with the wrong crowd, to which the teenager admitted. George went on to communicate the advice of the grandmother, “Your grandmother is saying you know exactly the trouble you got in already. I won’t say it out loud here, but it’s not too late to get away from the situation. She asks if you understand what she means and what you’re going to do.”

“Yes, Grandma, [the teenager] replied, I understand.”

“It’s up to you to change, she’s saying.”

“Yes, I can. I will.”¹⁸

Overdue Thanks; A Mark of Profound Affirmation

A spirit Maureen came through to a nurse. Maureen had been a crossing-guard who was a loving presence with the kids, and they loved her. She had saved the woman (nurse) when she was a child, at the expense of dying herself. Since then, the nurse had always wanted to thank her for her love and sacrifice. Maureen responded, “No reason to thank me, dear one. You have made me proud. Not only do you demonstrate love, but you also save lives.” Despite her protestations of not being anything like Maureen, the nurse admitted that she was a critical-care nurse for premature babies.¹⁹

¹⁸ Joel Martin and Patricia Romanowski Bashe. *We Don't Die: George Anderson's Conversations with the Other Side* (New York: Berkley Books, 1989), 221-22.

¹⁹ Van Praagh, *Unfinished Business: What the Dead Can Teach Us about Life*, 56-58.

Chapter 5: The Project-Presentation

The project was a workshop that sought to inform an audience of care providers, first of all of the nature of After-Death Communication, and secondly, to alert them to the value of this phenomenon as a proven, viable, and valuable source of comfort and healing for the bereaved. Thus care providers, while assessing the particular needs of a bereaved client, will be better able to present to the client, for consideration, that in addition to the many traditional methods available as vehicles for Grief Work, there is also the dynamic of After-Death Communication.

The workshop's design was as follows:

A pre-project welcoming period with morning refreshments

3 scheduled speakers, each allotted approximately 40 minutes

Question & Answer period

Questionnaire fill-out

Luncheon with flow-over sharing from the presentations

The topic of the presentation is that which is stated on page 2 of chapter 1 as follows:

BRIDGING HEAVEN AND EARTH: AFTER-DEATH COMMUNICATION

AS A SOURCE OF COMFORT AND HEALING FOR THE BEREAVED

Place of presentation:

Damien Chapel, Damien High School, La Verne, California

Date of presentation: March 19, 2010

The group of seventeen to whom the presentation was given included

- 1 Catholic pastor and 3 associate pastors
- 1 Catholic nun involved in Critical Care
 - 1 Protestant clergy person
 - 6 in the nursing profession
- 1 professor in Pastoral Theology and Bereavement from Claremont School of Theology
 - 2 representative from Hospice
 - 3 others in various occupations

The overall presentation consisted of three speakers, each scheduled to speak for approximately 40 minutes. The three presentations proceeded in the following order:

1. **Introduction by the Author:** After welcoming and thanking the members of the audience for their presence, the author respectfully asked that all present simply be open to the presentations of the three scheduled speakers and to write down any questions they might have for the question-and-answer period at the end of the overall presentation.
 - a. The author then proceeded with his introductory presentation in which he gave a concise, comprehensive presentation on the prevalence of grief in general, and specifically grief associated with the death of a loved one.
 - i. Grief has to do with “Loss,” and is very much a part of the human condition—having to leave behind, letting go, to no longer having. We experience grief/loss in a wide variety of ways—such as losing, having to let go or being deprived of such things as youth, health, relationships, friendships, partners, trust, job, prestige, status, honor, power, possessions, home, country, school, and pets. “In the ongoing flux of life [we] undergo many changes. Arriving,

departing, growing, declining, achieving, failing—every change involves a loss and a gain.” (C. Murray Parkes).

- ii. The most intense grief is at the death of a loved one. The earliest stages of childhood going back even to the birthing process itself has associated with it such emotions as abandonment, separation, anxiety, panic and grief, and the trauma of losing loved ones to death further along the journey of our lives simply “reactivates our very first experiences with separation and grief.”
- iii. Death: The most profound—both for the dying and those left behind. “Of all the wonders that I yet have heard, it seems to me most strange that men should fear, seeing that death, a necessary end, will come when it will come.” (Shakespeare). “I’m not afraid of death. I just don’t want to be there when it happens.” (Woody Allen).

b. The varieties of circumstances that surround and lead to death; the complexity of the dynamics of Grief and the mourning process.

i. Varieties of Death Experience:

(1) Death following a lengthy, fulfilling, productive life

(2) After a long-term illness.

(3) Sudden death

- Due to Crib Death,
- Previously unrecognized health issue
- Heart attack, stroke, victim of a virulent virus.
- Any one of a variety of accidents, including natural disaster.

(4) Sudden Death from Violence

- Homicide (so prevalent today)
- Suicide.
- Tragic accidents.

Sudden deaths, especially violent or accidental deaths, provoke our greatest shock, anxiety, and distress. Violent deaths make us feel vulnerable and fearful. Such deaths may provoke our rage or indignation at the injustice of the death. Suicide, too, has a tragic, shocking quality. Suicide may arouse unfounded guilt or a sense of failure among the survivors ... Sudden death feels unnatural. We preoccupy ourselves with “if onlys,” ruminations in which we try to rewrite history to erase this disaster. Because we are so unprepared for loss in a sudden death, and because we usually have so much unfinished business with the deceased, sudden deaths seem to be the hardest with which to cope

c. Death’s Aftermath: Grief and Mourning:

i. Difference between Grief and Mourning

(1) **Grief:** The Webster’s *New World Dictionary* defines grief as “an intense,

emotional suffering caused by loss, disaster, misfortune; acute sorrow;

deep sadness.” Grief is the internal part of loss, how we feel. Grief

happens; it is analogous to a wound to the soul, and mourning is the hard

work of treating that wound.

(2) **Mourning:** The Webster’s *New World Dictionary* defines mourning as

“the actions or feelings of someone who mourns, specifically the

expression of grief at someone’s death.” “Rather than being a synonym of

grief, mourning is the outward expression of grief that is being

experienced subjectively ... the emotional expression of grief, the active

psychological and adaptive processes facilitating grief.”

Therese Rando defines mourning as “conscious and unconscious processes and courses of action” that help the grieving person deal effectively with the deceased, with the person’s own self and with the external world. Rando goes on to say. There must be active movement and change if a major loss is to be processed, worked through, reconciled, and integrated into a mourner’s life, and if that individual is to be able to continue on in a healthy fashion in the new life without the loved one. Thus, grief is a necessary but not sufficient condition to come to successful accommodation of loss. The active processes of mourning are required as well.

- d. **The Imperative** for the bereaved to do Grief Work. It can be challenging; it is Work that involves coming to terms with the loss and integrating that loss into the life of the bereaved. But as the poet Robert Frost says, “The only way out is through.” (“A Servant to Servants”). Though there are many components in common for bereaved people, Grief for each individual is as unique as a fingerprint—depending on circumstances surrounding the death, and many other variables such as the relationship between the bereaved and the deceased, the psychological history of the bereaved, the history of Grief Work of the bereaved, as well as ethnic, cultural and religious factors of the bereaved person’s life context. The most challenging is Chronic/Complicated Grief – stuck in grief.
- e. Standard, traditional ways of helping the bereaved move through Mourning.
 - i. Family
 - ii. Friends
 - iii. Local church/faith community
 - iv. Hospitals with bereavement ministry
 - v. Hospice – not generally known they have a follow-up for bereaved

- vi. A wide variety of services and support groups
- vii. Professional health services (which may involve prescription medicine)
- f. In the aftermath of death oftentimes there are two areas that make the process of Mourning all the more difficult and challenging:
 - i. Perceived unfinished business:
 - (1) Regret at not having been there at the time of death
 - (2) Not having the chance of saying one last “I love you,” “I forgive you,” “Please forgive me,” etc.
 - ii. Questions about the Afterlife and the state of the deceased loved one in it.
 - (1) Does life continue? Is there a Life after life (or Life after Death)?
 - (2) What is life beyond death like?
 - (3) How is my departed loved one doing?
 - (4) Is my loved one happy?
 - (5) Is my loved one in Heaven/Hell/Purgatory?
 - (6) Does my loved one still love me/us?
 - (7) Is my loved one still interested in me/us?
 - (8) Why the death as it occurred: Why did you have to leave (me), Why the suicide, Why the homicide, Why the accident, Why the awful illness & suffering, Why the sudden death, Why death so young, Did you suffer, and on, and on, and on ...?
- g. If the bereaved could simply receive some communication from the deceased loved one, such would be a source of much comfort, peace of mind, and healing

- i. To provide answers to some of the nagging questions just mentioned
- ii. To bring some degree of resolution to unfinished business
- h. The focus of this presentation is to draw your attention to the fact that there is available a means by which such communication is indeed possible. It is to be understood that it is a means that is an adjunct and complementary to those recognized, traditional methods (mentioned earlier) of helping the bereaved process their grief. This method is known simply as After-Death Communication.
- i. *After Death Communication*: It means exactly what it says—some means by which communication is established between the two worlds: between our world as we know it and that world (the world of the spirit, the world beyond) that we believe exists beyond our usual ways of perception, a world in which we believe our departed loved one(s) now continues to exist. There are three known ways by which such communication is engaged/accomplished:
 - *Spontaneous* After-Death Communication
 - *Through Mediumship*
 - Through *Induced* After-Death Communication (*IADC*)

First off, *Spontaneous* After-Death Communication is very likely known by most people and is something that has (at one time or another) been experienced by a surprisingly high percentage of people, although oftentimes they are reluctant to share such experiences due to a concern of being misinterpreted, misunderstood, or thought to be simply grief-induced hallucinations or un-real wishes of the bereaved and therefore not considered credible. This phenomenon has been extensively researched and

documented by Bill and Judy Guggenheim and published in their book, *Hello from Heaven*. They chronicle the many, rather ordinary ways in which we can experience (if we are only open to such) the presence of deceased loved ones communicating news of their continued existence and their continued love and concern for the bereaved as well as the promise of future re-unions. The Guggenheims list twelve usual ways in which such communication can occur, such as scents or items associated with the deceased.

“The spirits reportedly manifest in a variety of ways: by speaking; touching; displaying the face or entire body; exuding the odor of a favorite cologne; causing lights to flicker; or using the telephone, answering machine, or computer. More often, however, the percipient discerns the [spirit] through an intuitive sense of presence, in vivid dreams, or in meaningfully timed appearances of birds or butterflies. Most contacts occur within a year of the death. Typically the message is the simple reassurance that the deceased survived and the relationship continues: “I’m okay. I’m nearby. I love you.”

- i. *Mediumship* refers simply to a person who has the gift of a heightened awareness of and sensitivity to the presence of the Spirit World and is able to pass on and communicate sentiments and messages of deceased loved ones to those bereaved ones left behind. But I shall defer any further elaboration on this phenomenon to the next speaker, Peter Close, who is a medium and has for many years been engaged in this dynamic.
- ii. *Induced After-Death Communication*: This phenomenon is a relatively new one that was discovered, somewhat fortuitously, by two people in the field of psychotherapy—first by Dr. Francine Shapiro and later on by Dr. Alan Botkin. This phenomenon is totally outside and unrelated to any religion, mediumship or Spiritualism. But again, I shall defer any further elaboration

on this phenomenon to our third speaker for today, Dr. Totton, who is a clinical psychologist and one of only two people in the state of California who is qualified to administer the method of IADC.

iii. **Some clarification of Mediumship.** Before we get to our next speaker on

Mediumship, I would like to offer some points of clarification for the benefit of those of you who might have some reservations regarding this dynamic.

- (1) Perhaps due to historical, cultural, religious or other influences, mediumship has been given a rather “bad rap.”
- (2) It needs to be understood, first of all, that it is an age old dynamic.
- (3) Both the Old Testament and the New Testament have numerous examples of communication between the two worlds—the many instances of God sending His messengers, His angels to our world: the angels coming to Mary, Zechariah, the Wise Men, the shepherds, to Paul and Peter, etc. Then also we read the account of the Transfiguration in which Jesus is seen communicating with the deceased Moses and Elijah. We read of the accounts of Jesus communicating with and bringing back from the dead the spirits of Lazarus, the widow’s son of Naim, the centurion’s daughter, etc. Jesus regularly engaged in communicating with spirits, sometimes admonishing them and ordering them to depart from persons whom they had taken over. And then of course, there is Jesus himself coming back from the dead. Jesus was a Master of the paranormal. He was the psychic medium *par excellence*. Anything you have heard about, or experienced

in the field of paranormal psychic activity – Jesus did all of those to an extraordinary degree.

- (4) And most importantly, in his final discourse, Jesus said to his disciples whom he was sending out to carry on his work, “You shall do things as great as these and even greater.” In John 14:12, we read of Jesus saying, “Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater ones than these, because I am going to the Father.” Again in Mt. 7:15-20, Jesus says, “Beware of false prophets ... by their fruits you shall know them ... Every good tree bears good fruit ... A good tree cannot bear bad fruit. So by their fruits you shall know them.” In Mt. 9:38-41, we read of John saying to Jesus, “Teacher, we saw a man driving out demons in your name, and we tried to prevent him because he is not one of us. Jesus replied, ‘Do not prevent him. There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. For whoever is not against us is for us. Anyone who gives a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, amen I say to you, will surely not lose his reward.’” The Book of Deuteronomy (30:20) of the Old Testament proclaims that true religion is how you live. In Luke 6:46, we read of Jesus teaching that your religion is what you do, to think on the precepts of Christ and do them is the hallmark of a true Christian (Phil. 4:8, 9), as long as we remember that it is in Christ “we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

2. Second Presentation by Peter Close, an internationally renowned medium.
 - a. Peter began by giving an autobiographical sketch of his life. He explained how since his earliest years he had had the gift of being able to tune into the presence of entities from the Spirit World. He described how he had been discouraged from engaging in such activity, and for many years had consciously suppressed his innate ability to communicate with spirits. He then explained how eventually he was led to see that it was a God-given gift that had been given him for a purpose. After being further led to develop and refine his gift, he realized that his gift was intended to be used to bring comfort, peace, and healing to people who were challenged by the grief of their bereavement.
 - b. Peter went on to give examples from his 30 years of experience as a medium, some examples of bereaved people whose lives were dramatically transformed for the better as a result of communication from their beloved deceased with which they were blessed through the mediumship of Peter.
 - c. Though a humble, soft-spoken man, Peter quietly but emphatically stated that at no time has he doubted that his gift was God-given, intended to be utilized to do God's good work in bringing healing to the pain of grief of bereaved persons.
 - d. Peter then gave an actual demonstration of mediumship at work, by giving messages from loved ones to three members of the audience. The three recipients of his spontaneous readings (communications) accepted the information that Peter mediated as credible and very comforting, two of whom had a subsequent one-on-one readings with Peter.

3. Dr. Carl Totton gave a presentation on Induced After-Death Communication. Dr. Totton is a licensed clinical psychologist and a graduate psychology school professor. He has a private practice in psychotherapy, and he is a certified teacher of the Dying Consciously Project (www.dyingconsciously.org). He is trained in *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing* (EMDR) and is certified in administering the Method called Induced After-Death Communication (IADC) by Dr. Allan Botkin, who discovered IADC. Dr. Totton's presentation included the following information:
 - a. Induced After-Death Communication is a relatively new approach to psychotherapy geared towards helping individuals recover from unresolved grief and bereavement associated with the loss of a loved one. A unique facet of this method is that the client often appears to have a form of direct encounter and communication with their deceased loved one which is invariably a powerful experience in healing.
 - b. In giving a brief history of the development of IADC, Dr. Totton first touched on a Dr. Francine Shapiro, a psychologist and researcher, who somewhat fortuitously discovered what was to become known and widely practiced as *Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing* (EMDR). She had found (first as applied to her own personal situation) that it offered significant help to individuals to process rapidly and recover from traumatic experiences. Dr. Shapiro's process had the client hold upsetting thoughts, feelings, or images in mind while having their eyes follow (or track) the therapist's hand or a wand. This process allowed the brain to engage in an accelerated information processing that freed and transforms "stuck"

thoughts, feelings and images which led to an adaptive and healing resolution, in a manner that is similar to that which occurs to all of us during REM sleep—the body’s innate healing capacity is restored.

- c. Dr. Totton went on to explain that Dr. Allan Botkin, while working with his clients at the Veterans Administration hospital, took Dr. Shapiro’s method and modified it to create what he called *Core-Focused EMDR*. *The Core-Focused EMDR* led the client to an even more rapid and deep resolution of their trauma, grief, and loss.
- d. Later on, while administering his *Core-Focused EMDR*, Dr. Botkin fortuitously discovered a further development of his method when he realized that a client was having an experience of actually seeming to encounter a deceased loved one, and having a powerful therapeutic and healing conversation with the deceased. He was able to replicate the phenomenon, and later on had a number of his colleagues also to replicate it. Dr. Totton pointed out that Dr. Botkin emphasizes that IADC is a natural process and cannot be forced by either the client or therapist; apparently attempting to do actually seems to prevent it. Dr. Totton further pointed out that approximately 70% of clients have an actual IADC experience, either partially or completely, and nearly 100% of all clients report marked improvement, even after years of grieving and sadness after exposure to the process.
- e. In conclusion, Dr. Totton noted that the precise origin of the IADC experience is really unknown. He insisted that the method does not “prove” the existence of

life after death or reincarnation, nor does he or Dr. Botkin use it with any such intention in mind. Furthermore, belief or disbelief in such cases plays no effect whatsoever in a client's ability to have a successful experience. Skeptics are helped just as much as believers.

- f. Typically, the IADC process requires only two extended sessions usually performed on two consecutive days for 90 minutes to two hours each. Only licensed mental health clinicians with additional EMDR certification are accepted for training by Dr. Botkin, who then certifies them to practice both IADC and Core-Focused EMDR.
- g. The presentation was concluded with a direct quote from Dr. Botkin, "It doesn't matter what you believe, what we believe, or even what the experiencers believe. The IADC experiences ... in thousands of patients result in dramatic life changes that heal grief and trauma in a very short time and are sustained long-term."¹

There followed a question-and-answer and sharing session, during which the prepared questionnaire (example on page 127) was handed out. At the end of this session, the questionnaires were collected. The group then retired to the dining area for a luncheon, during which further sharing, reflections, and questions were spontaneously continued among the speakers and the audience.

¹ Botkin and Hogan, *Induced After Death Communication: A New Therapy for Healing Grief and Trauma*, 167.

Analysis of the Project-Presentation

The Make-up of the Group of Participants

The group of participants to which the Project-Presentation was given consisted of seventeen members—eleven women and six men. Fifteen members were Catholic and two belonged to Protestant denominations. This breakdown was not due to any deliberate effort on the part of the author, but rather resulted from the fact that the invitation to participate was extended mostly to acquaintances of the author, most of whom simply happened to be colleagues and members of the Catholic faith to which the author belongs. Among the group were four Catholic priests, one United Methodist minister and Craig Professor of Pastoral Care and Counseling (retired), one Bereavement Manager, one Catholic nun and leader in religious community (also a caretaker), four currently practicing registered nurses, three retired or non-active nurse practitioners, and some others in various community and/or ministry related activities. The ages of the participants ranged from early thirties to mid-seventies.

Design and Intent of the Questions in the Administered Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to determine the participants' knowledge of both the nature of and inherent value in the phenomenon of After-Death Communication, their openness to it, as well as the overall effectiveness of the presentation. The questions asked in the questionnaire were designed for all participants without regard to their faith background or the vocation in which they either had previously been engaged or are presently pursuing. The predispositions of the participants regarding the topic of After-Death Communication were not known to the author prior to the answers of the

participants to the questionnaire, and therefore were not a factor in the selection of those invited to the presentation.

The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

- The information section provided the vocation/faith background of the participants. This was considered important in establishing any correlation between the faith background and/or the vocation of the participant and his/her openness to and acceptance of After-Death Communication as a valuable resource for providing help to bereaved persons. The members of the clergy were, interestingly enough, not only open to the information received through these presentations but also expressed a willingness to embrace these methods as valuable additions to their bereavement ministry. Also, the majority of those in the nursing vocation expressed a marked openness to both phenomena. Some of the nurses declared their belief that these phenomena “could be very valuable to many” whom they have seen in their practice, and would “greatly benefit some people.” While one participant expressed the need for some caution in distinguishing bereaved people who are in need of professional grief counseling and those whose Complicated Grief could be greatly helped by either of the two methods presented, the majority expressed a willingness to recommend bereaved people (who would be open to the experience) to seek out and avail of those services explained by the presenters. One nurse even admitted that she had

“already recommended somebody who has been greatly helped” in grief work through a medium.

- The assessment part of the questionnaire was to measure the quality of the presentation itself – whether the presentation as given enabled the participants to gain an understanding of the nature, credibility, importance and significance of After-Death Communication as a valuable, adjunct contribution to the traditional methods of healing for bereaved involved in Grief Work. These questions also sought to determine how much previous knowledge and/or experience the participants had had with either mediumship and/or Induced After-Death Communication and whether or not the participants had any interest in hearing or receiving more information on the subject of After-Death Communication. Even though the majority of the members of the audience had not had a prior “close encounter” with a medium, and virtually all had not had any prior knowledge of the phenomenon of Induced After-Death Communication, there was an obvious openness to and serious interest in both of these fields on the part of the participants. Some commented that they found it “fascinating and stimulating,” “a most enlightening experience,” “extremely useful,” “blown away by the entire experience. Thank you,” “a very wonderful and uplifting presentation,” “excellent information and experience,” “the time just flew – would love a longer and more in-depth discussion.” One commented that the presentation led him to an increased and favorable awareness of the nature and

value of the two phenomena presented, as well as the realization that the general public was not aware of either mediumship or Induced After-Death Communication as viable means of treating *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*, including grief, and viewed any increased awareness of them as such for himself and the general public as being a “breakthrough.” In general, the sentiments of the groups of participants suggested a welcoming openness to the hope offered by any new way of helping bereaved deal with their grief.

- The third section sought to establish the degree of acceptance on the part of the participants of After-Death Communication as a credible and valuable adjunct to traditional means of engaging in Grief Work. It further sought to establish the readiness of the participants to recommend this phenomenon to others (or what more it would take for them to recommend it to others), as well as articulate any reservations they felt about making any such recommendation. Virtually all found the presentations by the speakers to be not only fascinating but indeed very credible, and most participants admitted that their experience of it was very informative and enlightening. Of the seventeen participants, only three had had limited personal experience with mediumship in the past; the rest had had no first hand, personal contact with a medium. Nevertheless, twelve members declared the experience of the presentation added significantly to their knowledge of this phenomenon and greatly increased their awareness of and belief in its value. With the exception of two participants, the remaining members of the audience

expressed a desire to experience contact with the dynamic of mediumship. As a matter of fact, three members of the audience immediately set up an appointment for a one-on-one reading with the medium, and a group from among the audience attended a further presentation by Peter Close (medium) on the evening of that same day at a nearby city. Many of the participants were very interested in the presentation by Dr. Totton on Induced After-Death Communication, not just because they had not heard of this phenomenon before—which virtually all the participants had not—thus in itself making it something new and strange and fascinating, but far more so because it was a presentation by an experienced, qualified psychotherapist on a topic that was outside of and unrelated to anything religious. It was perceived as belonging more to the field of science, and of course the high rate of success claimed by both Dr. Totton and his mentor Dr. Botkin lent credibility to the efficacy of the method—the very high percentage of success in treating traumatized patients so desperately in need of healing. Some members admitted to being personally aware of a number of Armed Forces Veterans (including Viet Nam Vets and those of more recent military engagements) as well as some people experiencing Complicated Grief who could be greatly helped by either of the phenomena presented.

Review Remarks

All in all, for virtually all of the participants, the presentations at this event were accepted comfortably and found to be quite informative, “eye-opening,” inspiring, and

hopeful. Even though for the majority of the participants, their experience of mediumship had been limited to either materials they had read on this dynamic or seen through the recently increased showing on TV of programs on different aspects of mediumship, this presentation by the medium, Peter Close, was their first actual, personal experience of the dynamic of mediumship. They were pleasantly surprised by the humble, non-sensational and serious attitude with which this medium carefully articulated the dynamics of mediumship and the history of the exercising of his gift for the benefit of healing for those grieving the loss of loved ones who had died. His personal testimony made for a convincing and credible argument for mediumship as a non-threatening, God-given gift, endowing those so gifted with an invitation to follow the lead of Jesus himself through the exercising of their gift as a valid and valuable means of healing, especially bringing peaceful, comforting relief and healing to the painful wounds of grief.

For virtually all of the participants, the information on Induced After-Death Communication by Dr. Carl Totton was a first. Prior to this presentation, they hadn't even heard of the term Induced After-Death Communication, not to mention having had any knowledge of this dynamic or the now proven value it has to offer. Their comments reflect their being pleasantly surprised at being informed of the existence of such a dynamic, its proven efficacy, as well as its increasing use by convinced professionals in the field of mental health therapy. The participants were left convinced of the real value this dynamic has to offer in enabling deeply traumatized, grieving people to come to terms with their grief and its causes, integrate same into their lives, and resume a

wholesome, healthy engagement with the flow of life. The participants were further appreciative of the increasing availability of this dynamic to anyone needing and wishing to avail of it, and indicated a resolve to recommend it without reservation to those whom they deem to be in need of it.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

New inventions, findings, and ideas can be effective only if people are properly introduced to such in the form of being provided with essential information, appraised of the inherent value in such, and are enabled to acknowledge the perceived need for them. It is to that end that the author of this thesis and the Project-Presentation sought to inform an audience of care providers—members of clergy, grief counselors, healthcare professionals—of the nature, value and availability of the phenomenon of After-Death Communication. Thus care providers, while assessing the particular needs of a bereaved client, will be better able to present to the client, for her/his consideration, that in addition to the many traditional methods available as vehicles for Grief Work, there is also available the dynamic of After-Death Communication—both in the form of mediumship and/or Induced After-Death Communication (IADC)—as proven, viable and valuable means of engaging in Grief Work that effect inner peace, spiritual comfort and healing for people who are struggling to come to terms with the challenge of their grief.

Mindful of the lack of openness of many people to the phenomenon of mediumship due to reasons cultural, historical, and especially those of traditional, organized religions of the western world, the author of this thesis sought to bring clarification and reconsideration to past, misinformed stereotypes and stigmas relating to this dynamic, by placing it in a more easily understood and favorable context, supported by the authority of Scripture in which Jesus himself—the medium *par excellence*—in his final discourse issued to his disciples his unequivocal exhortation, “I am telling you the truth: those who believe in me will do what I do—yes, they will do even greater things,

for I am going to the Father.” (John 14:12). Thus the author of this thesis sought to provide a clearer understanding of the scriptures that portray a Jesus who—through the lived experience of his engagement in public ministry, his death, and his resurrection—confirmed that life continued after death, that communication with the spirit world was something in which he regularly engaged (see Matthew 17: 2-3), and that communication with him (now from the spirit world) was not only entirely possible but a dynamic in which his followers are invited to engage, a type of dynamic that certainly should not be perceived as dangerous, deluded, or sinful. Afterall, as Jesus himself said, “By their fruits you shall know...” (Mt. 9:41); “My command is, love one another as I have loved you.” (Jn. 15:12).

In turn, the author sought—through the Project-Presentation—to establish among the participants their degree of openness to the materials presented in the workshop on mediumship and Induced After-Death Communication, their interest in receiving further information on these phenomena, as well as the degree to which the presentations left them with a willingness to embrace these phenomena as viable and valuable means of healing that would do well to be utilized as added tools in grief ministry.

As presented in chapter 5 of this thesis, the Project-Presentation consisted of three speakers: 1) the author’s giving a concise summary of the overall content of this thesis—the many facets surrounding the phenomenon of death, the aftermath of death in the form of the dynamics of grief and mourning, the imperative need for bereaved to engage in effective Grief Work, and finally, the reality that, in addition to the more well known, traditional means that enable bereaved people to process their grief, there is also available

a very effective, adjunct method known as After-Death Communication in the form of mediumship and/or Induced After-Death Communication, 2) A presentation by a medium who gave a concise history of mediumship, including an autobiographical sketch of his personal gift of mediumship as well as a demonstration of mediumship in action—a number of mini readings for some members of the audience of care providers attending the workshop, and 3) A presentation by an experienced, professional psychotherapist—also certified in administering Induced After-Death Communication—on the history, dynamics, and efficacy of the method of Induced After-Death Communication.

Even though the majority of the members of the audience had not had a previous experience with mediumship and virtually all had not even heard of the phenomenon of Induced After-Death Communication, the reception to the overall presentation was very favorable.

Many of the comments in the questionnaire pointed to the fact that the participants did indeed get the main point of the presentations—added, valuable resources making available to needy, bereaved people the dynamic of healing that in so many ways is a reflection of the healing energies exercised by Jesus in so much of his active, public ministry.

Virtually all found it to be not only fascinating but indeed very credible, and the comments of many admitted that their experience of it was very informative and enlightening. As a matter of fact three members of the audience set up an appointment for a one-on-one reading with the medium, and a group from among the audience

attended a further presentation by Peter Close (medium) on the evening of that same day at a nearby city.

Many of the participants were very interested in the presentation by Dr. Totton on Induced After-Death Communication, not just because it was something new and strange and fascinating, but far more so because it was a presentation by an experienced, qualified psychotherapist on a topic that was outside of and unrelated to anything religious. It was perceived as belonging more to the field of science, and of course the high rate of success claimed by both Dr. Totton and his mentor Dr. Botkin lent credibility to the efficacy of the method, the very high percentage of success in treating traumatized patients so desperately in need of healing.

There are some interesting points to be noted from the responses of the participants. Of the seventeen members of the audience, fourteen were Catholic, and two identified themselves as Protestant. Only one Catholic indicated some reservation regarding the content of the presentation, while one of the Protestants indicated that at present he was not exactly comfortable enough to embrace all that was presented but admitted that he was still processing all the information received. It is also worthy of note, that a high majority of the Catholics were apparently not deterred by the traditional, official position of disapproval of their church with regard to this phenomenon of ADC, but instead demonstrated an openness and freedom to receive the information presented as well as a comfortable willingness to embrace it since they had come to perceive it as a valid source of healing for the wounds of grief.

Also while for most of the participants, this was a first time experience with both realities—mediumship and Induced After-Death Communication—nevertheless, a high percentage of them indicated a desire to hear more on these topics, and a number expressed a resolve to engage in some further personal research. This fact suggests two points: 1) the public is not that well informed on such matters, 2) there is a definite desire to hear and experience more on this dynamic, and 3) there is a definite openness to considering them as acceptable resources for healing. And the author further suggests that this points to a need—especially for care providers—based on these findings, for greater efforts to be expended in making such information more readily available.

It is also especially satisfying to the author that his pastor, who was present for the workshop, indicated that he was very interested in hearing more on this phenomenon, and since he has begun to set in motion the establishment of a Bereavement Ministry in our parish, it is hoped that a workshop similar to this one will be included as a part of the training for the team members.

Appendix A

Questionnaire

1. Informational

- Your religion or faith background _____
- Your present vocation _____

2. Assessing information from the presentation

- Have you previously had any experience of mediumship or IADC? _____
- Do you feel the information as presented was sufficient? _____
- After the experience of this presentation do you now feel you would like additional information? _____
- After this presentation, do you feel you are more open to the reality and value of ADC as a source of comfort and healing for bereaved? _____
- Do you feel that you would be comfortable yourself in going to a medium? _____

3. The Possibility of ADC as a valuable Adjunct to Traditional Means of Grief Work

- Would you now feel sufficiently comfortable in suggesting ADC to a bereaved client? _____
- Would you recommend a bereaved client (especially one in chronic grief) to seek ADC as a means of healing _____
- Would you be interested in available resources in this field _____
- Do you feel that the phenomenon of ADC is in any way challenging to your faith. If so, please explain briefly _____

Any further comments you may wish to add _____

(continue on back)

Appendix B

Questionnaire Results

| Participants # | Religious affil? | Present location? | Previous Experience of Ministry/IADC? | Most helpful in the presentation? | How perception changed? | Will go to a medium? | Need additional info? | Comfortable in recommending to others? | Reservations in recommending to others? | What it would take to recommend to a bereaved person? | Additional comments |
|----------------|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Catholic | Retired | No | Application | Breakthrough | Yes | Finished Thesis | Very comfortable | | | Excellent extremely useful |
| 2 | Catholic | Leader in Rel. Community | No | Application | more belief | Yes | very much, finished thesis | for who are open to it | cynical people | More info & exper. it myself | Fascinating & stimulating |
| 3 | Catholic | Nurse Practitioner | No | fascinating | more belief | Yes | comfortable | comfortable | more information | more knowledge | Enlightening experience |
| 4 | Catholic | Registered Nurse | No | Informational | very open | Yes | very comfortable | very comfortable | ??? | more information | Blown away |
| 5 | Catholic | Mom | as a child | none | none | yes | No | complicated Grief | depends on type of grief | right person & situation | |
| 6 | Catholic | Registered Nurse | Yes | everything | confirmed its usefulness | Yes | yes; will do further resrch | very comfortable | none | absolutely recommend | |
| 7 | Catholic | Executive Assistant | No | there is hope | more belief | Yes | Yes | yes | none | nothing | wonderful & uplifting |
| 8 | Catholic | Bookkeeper | Yes | theological | confirmed its Usefulness | Yes | very comfortable | none | Absolutely recommend | absolutely recommend | |
| 9 | Catholic | Retired Caregiver | One | IADC—new info. | | Yes | Yes | very valuable | none | comfortable | |
| 10 | Protestant | Bereavement Manager | No | very educating | still processing | No | | not sure, but comfortable | | | |
| 11 | United Method. | Retired | No | healing that resolves grief | more belief | Yes | Yes | fine | psychotic | presence & avail. of resources | excellent info & experience |
| 12 | Catholic | Retired | No | IADC | more belief was skeptical | Yes | Yes, | could benefit some people | none | how to refer and where | very interesting |
| 13 | Catholic | Caretaker/R.N. | Yes | everything | more belief | | Yes | none | Very High | nothing, highly recommended | excellent |
| 14 | Catholic | Priest / Artist | No | alternative healing | interested in more | Yes | Yes | Yes | none | A sense that it might help. | |

Appendix C

Some Traditional Resources for Engaging in Grief Work

I welcome the storm as my terrible guest
 It thunders through my bones, washing shadows
 from my soul
 and leaves ... my heart cleansed
 my wings new
 and fears at rest.

—Alison Asher¹

As stated throughout this thesis, it is imperative for bereaved people to be able or enabled to engage in effective Grief Work. Recovery from grief is achieved by a series of small and correct action choices made by the bereaved. This work of grieving may take many forms and may go in many different directions. It is to that end that the following resources are listed:

Standard, traditional ways of helping the bereaved move through Mourning.

- Family
- Friends
- Local church/faith community
- Hospitals with bereavement ministry
- Hospice – not generally known they have a follow-up for bereaved
- A wide variety of services and support groups (some listed below)

¹ Alison Asher, *Soaring into the Storm: A Book about Those Who Triumph Over Adversity* (Seattle: Lifeskills Press, 1996).

- Professional health services (which may involve prescription medicine)

At the end of this appendix, there is listed a selective bibliography in the area of Bereavement. This was made available by Reverend Rick Headly of *Bereavement Outreach – Care Alternatives: Hospice for Life* in Riverside, California.

Some Grieving Resources – Local and National

Riverside Hospice Bereavement

6052 Magnolia Ave
Riverside , CA 92506
(951) 274-0710

Northbay Hospice & Bereavement

1300 Oliver Rd
Fairfield , CA 94534
(707) 429-7758

Bereavement Network Resources of Sacramento

Serving the San Dimas Area
(916) 557-5882

L. A. Center-For Traumatic Stress & Sudden Bereavement

Serving the San Dimas Area
(800) 248-6606
(818) 244-7257

The Grief Recovery institute: Service and Programs

PO Box 56223
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403
(888) 773-2683
www.grief.net and support@grief.net

The Grief Recovery Institute and thousands of affiliates offer a variety of programs for grievers. Certified grief recovery personnel facilitate Grief Recovery Outreach Programs in cities large and small throughout the United States and Canada.

National Self-Help Clearinghouse

Room 620N
Graduate School and University Center City University of New York

33 West 42nd Street
 New York, NY 10036
 (212) 840-1259

This clearinghouse provides information on peer support groups of all kinds

The Self-Help Center

1600 Dodge Avenue, Suite S-122
 Evanston, IL 60204
 (312) 328-0470

Founded by Dr. Leonard Borman, the Center serves as a clearing house for self-help and mutual-help groups. The staff has found that there are groups now for sufferers of all the 17 disease categories recognized by the World Health Organization. The Center is particularly helpful for locating the appropriate group in one's locality.

The National Hospice Organization

1901 N. Fort Myers Drive, Suite 402
 Arlington, VA 22209
 (703) 243-5900

Hospice is a concept of care for those who are dying. More than 2000 hospices now are organized in North America. Most of them are non-profit, community-based organizations of volunteers, lay persons, and professionals who have received special training in palliative care for patients and support services for families before, during, and following the death of the patient.

Friends for Survival, Inc.

P.O. Box 214463,
 Sacramento, CA 95821
 (916) 392-0664
www.friendsforsurvival.org

Survivors

993 "C" Santa Fe Avenue,
 Vista, CA 92083

Mutual help and 12-step program to recover from grief due to the death of a loved one.

Grief Net

www.griefnet.org

This resource provides a comprehensive support group directory, special resources, and a bookstore. Additionally they have a wonderful area about journaling and a six-week-guide with a Christian focus that includes scriptures, ideas for writing, and journal pages you can print.

National Self-Help Clearinghouse

Room 620N
 Graduate School and University Center
 Cit University of New York
 33 West 42nd Street
 New York, NY 10036
 (212) 840-1259

This clearinghouse provides information on peer support groups of all kinds

The Elisabeth Kübler-Ross Center

South Route 616
 Head Waters, VA 24442
 (703) 396-3441

As part of Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' continuing legacy with terminal patients, this center is a rural retreat to promote her ideas about health care for the dying. It provides workshops, seminars, books, and audio and video tapes in the field of Death and Dying.

Some Websites that Can Provide Help in Grief Work

| | |
|---|--|
| Bereavement Journey | www.thebereavementjourney.com |
| Hospice Net: Bereavement | www.hospicenet.org/html/bereavement.html |
| The Bereavement Group | www.groups.usn.com/bereavement |
| Bereavement | www.bereavement.org |
| Bereavement Camps | www.kidscamps.com/special_needs/bereavement.html |
| Living with Loss Magazine - Bereavement Publications | www.bereavementuag.com |
| Coping with Loss: Guide to Growing & Bereavement | www.helpguide.org/mental/grief_loss.htm |
| Frequently Asked Questions on Grief and Growing | www.davidkessler.org/html/ga_grief.html |
| AARP: Grief and Loss | www.aarp.org/families/grief_loss |
| GriefNet.org | www.griefnet.org |
| Candlelighters issues - staff@candlelighters.org and webmaster@candlelighters.org | |

Selective Bibliography for Bereavement

Provided by Reverend Rick Headly

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Donnelly, K. *Recovering from the Loss of a Child*

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Edelman, Hope. *Motherless Daughters*

Edwards Bouton, Eleanor. *Journaling from the Heart*

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Finkbeiner, A.K. *After the Death of a Child: Living with Loss through the Years*

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